

EVANGELISCHE  
KIRCHE IN ÖSTERREICH

# Ministry, Ordination, Episkopé

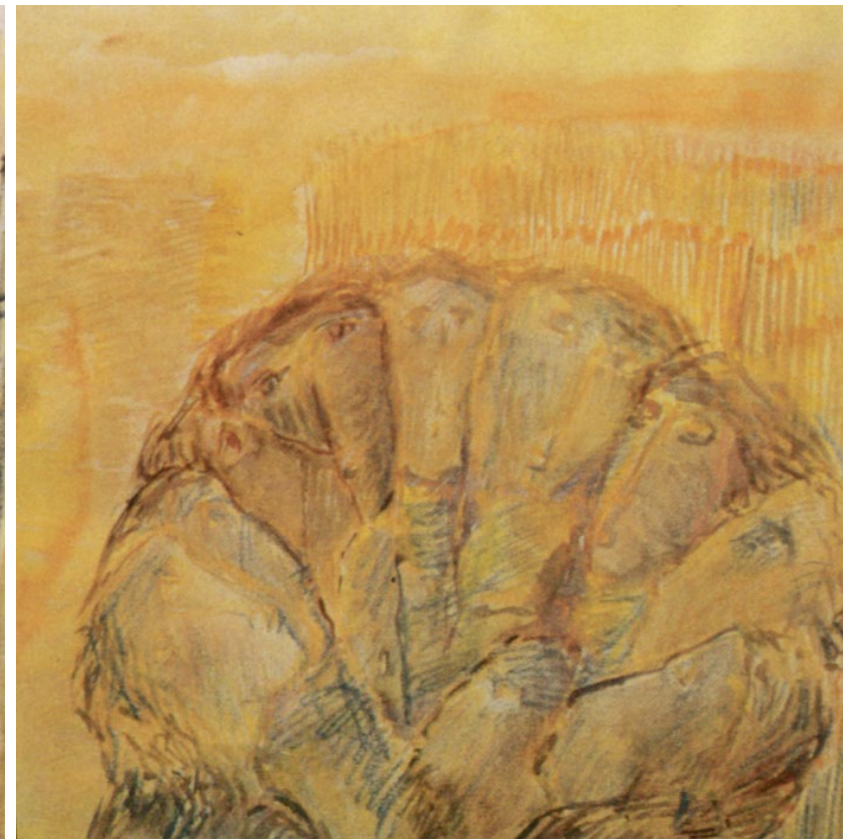
## An Austrian Perspective (A.C.) on Ministry and the Ordination of Women

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GEKE, Oslo 2026

# 1. Just a small reminder of our roots

- As human beings we are all created in inherent dignity and with equal and inalienable rights (cf. Gen 1 + 2, Universal Declaration of Human Rights)
- “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Gal 3, 28)
- “An order of ministries arises under the guidance of the Gospel and the Holy Spirit” – and both supported the importance of various charismata, roles, trainings, pragmatic responsibilities.
- Hence, early Christian communities were lively, dynamic, constantly changing and transforming. The most important transformation was and is perhaps that (which is narrated since early Easter morning again and again) from a community of fear towards a community of hope.

For internal use at the conference only!



Christamaria Schröter: Wirken des Geistes an der Gemeinschaft

- Recent research by men and women clearly demonstrates: Communities were small, very flexible and variable in size, form, age, gender, charismata etc. There was no common text, rite or creed (J. Schröter, Kirche, 2011; Kinzig, Creed, 2018) Their inner bond was the confession to Jesus as Christ and saviour, regular meetings with sharing of bread and wine, reading of scriptures, prayer, speeches by this or that person to others. (Wolter, Paulus, 2011)
- Very flexible in regard to Jews and other communities, man/women, social and economic hierarchies, institutionalization, authority, order of communities etc. There was no central authority.



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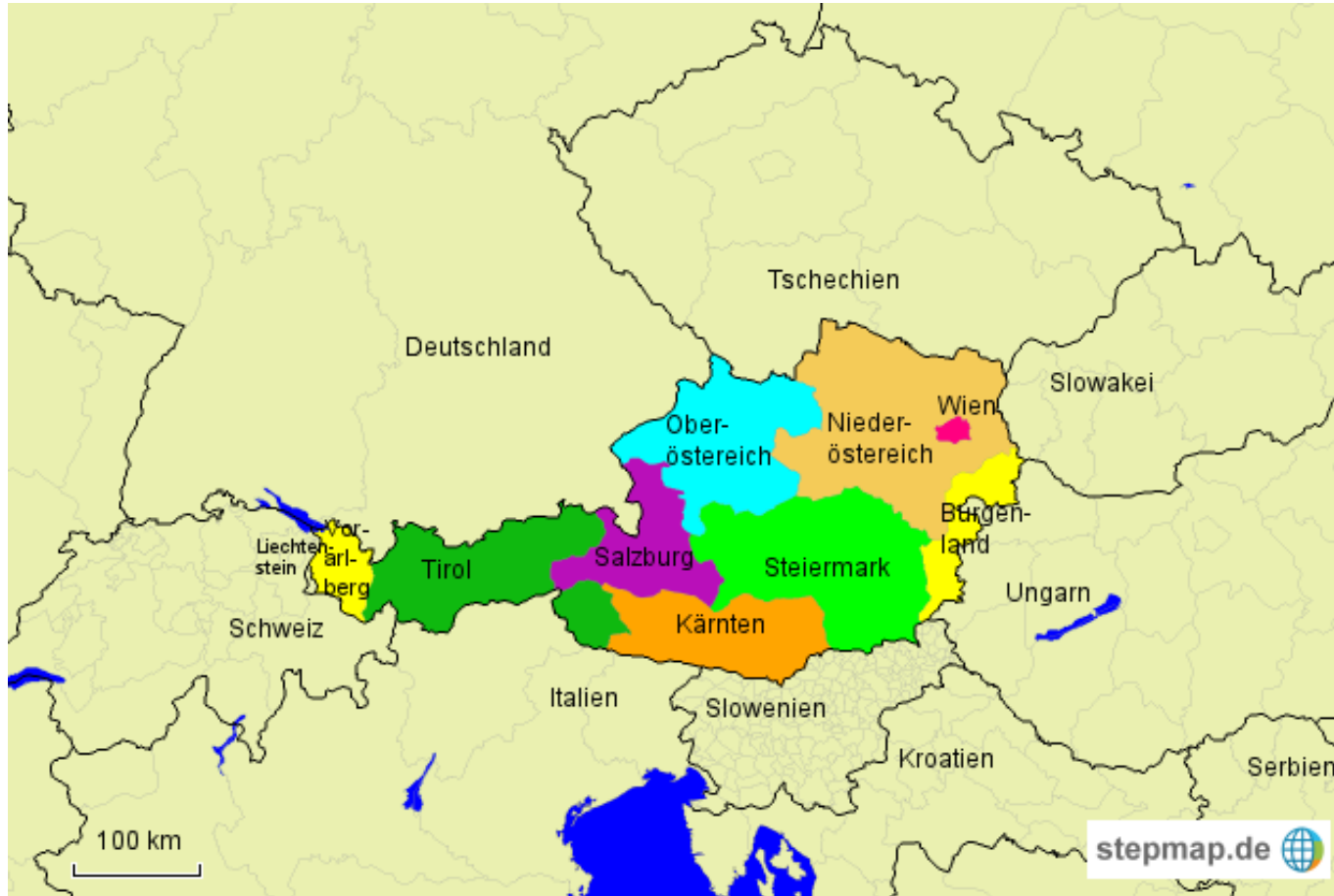


- ekklesía = term is likely not to be introduced by Jesus but in the wake of the disciples (Mt 16,18; Mt 18,17). Related to the Lord, but not as “the” body of Christ; instead “we” are or “you” are one body in Christ (Wolter, Paulus, 2011).
- „In neutestamentlicher Zeit waren Gottesdienste nicht lediglich etwas, was das frühe Christentum ‚hatte‘ oder ‚feierte‘. Das frühe Christentum war vielmehr selbst Gottesdienst bzw. existierte als Gottesdienst.“ (M. Wolter, Gottesdienst 2018).
- But somehow that changed, including the roles of men and women...



## 2. Protestant Church (Augsburg Confession) in Austria

- 238.000 members (theologically very diverse)
- 199 parishes, 40 vacant
- Ministries ordained: bishop, pastors (in various positions bottom up), (recently: deacons);
- Special vocation: teachers, lecturers/predicants, pastoral/spiritual care
- Lay leading positions: presbyters (in various positions bottom up)
- KMU VI (Germany)! Erprobungsräume (new, sustainable, beyond traditional milieus)



- **1928** – Admission to studying Theology at the University
- **1940** – Admission to Pastoral Training (Vikariat) without ordination, 80% salary, no support in housing and child care (which was all granted to male vicars/pastors)
- **1942-1945** – „Notverordnung“: Admission to offer services in reduced form
- **1955** – 5. Session of General Synod: Application of female theologians for gender equality in pastoral positions and ordination - declined
- **1965** – 6. Session of General Synod: Commitment to access to church related institutions, pastoral care and religious education, but no electability to parish, no eucharist, no pastoral position in case of marriage
- **1980** – 9. Session of General Synod: very difficult discussion, but finally admission to ordination and full pastoral positions
- **1994** – Getraud Knoll – first female Superintendent (Burgenland)
- **2000** – Hannelore Rainer – first female pastoral Oberkirchenrätin
  - **2023** – Ingrid Monjencs – first female President of General Synod
- **2025** - Cornelia Richter – first female Bishop



Women in pastoral positions: Top level: 1 of 1, middle positions: 1 of 7, ground level: 96 of 212

Women in lay leading positions: Top level: 1 of 1, middle positions: 5 of 7, ground level: app. 40%

**Bishop (1f): only by power of the word**  
**+ Church Board (1f, 1f, 4m)**

**General Synod (President, 1f)**  
**+ Board of Synod (3 m)**



Church Presbyterium

7 Dioceses:  
**7 Superintendents (1f, 6m)**  
**+ Superintendentalkuator:in (5f, 2 m)**  
**+ Superintendential-Ausschuss (Board, f/m)**

„Superintendentialversammlung“



Religious  
Education

Pastoral Training

Categorial  
Pastoral Care

Diaconical  
Institutions

Church  
Musicians

199 Parishes: **212 Pastors (96 female)** + **Kurator:in (f/m)** + Presbyterial Boards (f/m)  
+ 515 „Lectors“ (voluntary, f/m)

# 3. Consequences to go

- As religion is always close to fundamentalist tendencies (manipulating others), normative claims without further (self-) reflection and sober theological argumentation, we still need fully trained and ordained ministers who know about the various historical, hermeneutical & dogmatic approaches to our tradition.
- Yet, human and financial resources are reduced. So we will have to remain flexible, try to hear and follow the call, let the church flourish as community & gathering driven by the Gospel (Gerber suggests to translate „Gemeinde“ as „Versammlung“ to set the accent on their early non-institutional character; Gerber, Braut Christi, 2013; zur Übersetzungsdifferenz zwischen Kirche und Gemeinde vgl. auch: Wenz, Kirche, 2005)
- Our task: Face your resources, your sense and chances of self-efficacy, your responsibility towards power and misuse of power, and try to find out what really helps, encourages, empowers, and enhance human communities in a peaceful way.

# In this respect communities are also „Multiple Modernities“ (Shmuel Eisenstadt, 2007)

- Various models and modes of communities, „Versammlungen“ and the ways their responsibilities are shared.
- Various models of ministry (general and special responsibilities, workload, range of family support and shared responsibilities of fathers and mothers!).
- Shortage of young ministers demand and allow for creative synergies (e.g. ministers, lay lectors/predicants, cantors/church musicians, teachers).
- Training relevant to age and experience in:  
leadership, diplomatic management, use of power, forms of empowerment, sensitivity towards resilience, ambivalence and thoughtfulness
- **Episkopé** = My task as Bishop: Caring for those whom you are responsible for:  
Dynamic practice of being curious, communicate, connect, try to see what the Gospel could demand here and now...