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Fostering Diversity in Congregations: A practical framework for local churches to reflect and improve accessibility

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Abstract

Diversity, understood as the extent to which the members of a group or organization differ from one another, is fundamental for the Church, but often not given to a great extent in local congregations, at least not in the Evangelical Church in Germany. This article wants to support practitioners in a diversity-oriented development process for their local churches.

In the first part, the concept of diversity management is introduced and some ideas pointed out and adapted for congregational development. Taking these basic ideas and additionally systematizing some suggestions from tools for diversity-oriented organizational development, in the second part a practical framework is presented. It has been created for identifying barriers and finding starting points for enhancing diversity in local protestant churches in Germany. Based on a model of four levels of accessibility and exclusion, the core is a framework of five areas of church activities in which unconscious barriers can be found regarding these different levels of accessibility. The aim is to help congregations to take some manageable steps to better include all who are already present and to become more accessible for others who are different in certain dimensions of diversity.

Diversity is at the roots of the Church (Eckhold 2017: 12–13). On Pentecost, when the apostle Peter first got the courage and inspiration to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, the listeners were a diverse crowd, having come to Jerusalem from different nations and cultural backgrounds (Acts 2.4-11). This is programmatic: From the very beginning, the Church is built with an astonishing diversity of people (Frey, 2014: 36). That mirrors the group of the twelve disciples and the larger group of Jesus'

followers, where cultural, economic, political, social and gender differences were struggled with, but somehow made less relevant by the charisma and teachings of Jesus. There are passages in the New Testament letters that can be understood as a plea for accepting diversity: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 3.28, ESV). The gospel is for everyone (Mt. 28.20; 1 Tim. 2.4). The eschatological perspective also emphasizes the diversity of those who will cherish God's presence together (Lk. 13.28; Rev. 7.9).

This biblical opening is a bit one-sided and maybe even naïve. Within the same New Testament scriptures, there are passages that speak of exclusion, of "in" and "out", of the tolerable and the not tolerable, and of the struggles and developments regarding the norms and ground rules. Is diversity to be allowed regarding circumcision? Regarding the attendance of heathen festivities? Regarding sexual activity? The interdependence of ethics and culture is only one of the difficulties when making these decisions. And even though the vision for inclusiveness and diversity regarding race, sex, culture, religious background, socio-economic or family status and other dimensions is remarkable, the inclusiveness is not all-encompassing. There are certain shared beliefs and ethics that raise boundaries between "in" and "out", and at the same time these beliefs and ethics seem to serve as an anchor for unity – a unity that can then include many differences.

And yet, even with these shared beliefs and ethics, unity in diversity might be more of an ideal than a reality (Krieg 2017: 540–2) – at least when we jump into present times and walk into a Sunday morning service in most churches in Germany,[1] or look at data on participation in church activities, or at correlations between a felt connection with Church and the socio-economic status of church members (see below). Surely there is diversity among churchgoers, but the chances for positive encounters or even for belonging are by no means equal – even though equal opportunities, inclusion and being a church for all are strong values for the Protestant Churches in Germany (EKD 2015; https://www.landeskirche-hannovers.de/gesellschaft-und-leben/zusammenleben/vielfalt, accessed on 29.04.2025).

With this mixed background of New Testament visions, current values that are broadly shared in Church and society, and a few indicators of tensions and problems, I want to step into the topic of diversity in local congregations. "Diversity" basically means "the extent in which members of an entity, such as a group or organization, differ from one another" (Gonzales and Zamanian 2015: 595). How diverse are local congregations typically? Or: How homogenous is each of them? Who is more or less likely to show up for any church activities? Who, comparing those who are somehow

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[1]   The focus in this article is on local churches of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD).

involved in a congregation to all the local church members or even all the local people, is missing?

These questions have been researched and discussed in the context of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) for some relevant dimensions where people differ from one another, especially in age (Jacobi 2024), sex (Wunder 2024), milieus (Schulz 2014; Ahrens and Wegner 2008), and educational and socio-economic backgrounds (Kläden and Wunder 2024). In the context of missionary church development, especially the dimension of (non)-religious upbringing has often been considered, and churches have been called to lower thresholds and remove barriers for those without a church background (Herbst 2018: 180-89). Regarding the dimension of (dis) abilities, there are lots of publications, usually connected to inclusion discourses (e.g. Eurich and Lob-Hüdepohl, 2011; EKD 2022). The cultural and national background of people has received special attention in the discussions and projects of international churches (so-called "migrant" churches) and intercultural churches (Etzelmüller and Rammelt, 2022).

All these different aspects and discourses can be linked to diversity,an umbrella term that can include lots of dimensions of difference. Diversity can be used as a descriptive category – regarding any specific attributes, the range of diversity can be analysed and described. Yet, diversity isn't just a descriptive term. It also implies normativity, seeing diversity as a goal and a resource (Grümme, 2017: 595–6). Concepts of diversity emphasize the value of diversity. And they are linked to inclusion[2] traditions, thereby pointing to questions of participation and belonging. Therefore, when reflecting the diversity of local churches, two questions need to be considered together: What variety of people show up? And how well are those present actually included and given the chance to participate and contribute?

If limited diversity is diagnosed for a local church congregation, how can they act upon that? How can a local church start a process of diversifying and ensuring that different people can fully participate? There are instruments that are used in diversity-oriented organizational development, like questions for self-evaluation and suggestions of how to work on communication, structures, hiring policies etc. Some of these are also reflected in church policies and evaluation tools.

In this article, I will first give a short introduction to diversity management, and ask what could be learnt from the main concepts for fostering diversity in congregations. Based on that, a practical framework has been developed from diversity management concepts and instruments. This framework has two parts: one helps to reflect levels of inclusion or exclusion, and the other shows areas of accessibility and structures the process of recognizing biases and barriers. Both parts will be

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2   For an overview on the discourses on inclusion in protestant theology in Germany see Brunn 2021.

presented, with the aim of supporting practitioners in reflecting and taking some steps towards a diversity strategy that fits their profile.

1 Diversity management: Introduction and conceptual learnings for local congregations

Diversity management (DiM) is a concept for actively dealing with diversity in an organization. It is used in profit and non-profit organisations (see Bendl, Hanappi-Egger and Hofmann 2012: 13–14). It comes from two traditions and combines them: One is the equal opportunities movement, the fight for social justice.[3] This tradition is closely related to affirmative action and legal frameworks on equal opportunities. The other tradition, which comes directly from business management, is the realization that diversity is a vital resource for organizational performance (Cox 1993). DiM combines these two traditions and motivations. In theory and empirical research, there are different approaches and disciplines involved (see Yadav and Lenka 2020). From the beginning, it has a strong practical output, being used in consulting and training (Bendl, Hanappi-Egger and Hofmann 2012: 13). One reason for its increasing popularity is the "appeal of the idea that social justice and performance goals are not necessarily incompatible" (Gonzalez and Zamanian 2015: 595).

Since DiM is often used in institutions and organizations in education, social work and politics, it might also have something to offer for the church, in so far as the church has, amongst others, an organizational dimension (Hermelink 2011). If a church wants to deal positively with diversity and even increase diversity, what insights can it get from DiM?

DiM **appreciates diversity in itself**, as being a great resource for the group or organisation. Diversity helps both to complement and to challenge each other within a team or organization. This appreciation of diversity creates a proactive attitude. Instead of just asking "What needs to change in the organization for the people that are already here?", DiM asks the question "What needs to change so that people want to join? And how can we attract people from those groups that are not represented equally in the organization yet?"

DiM focuses on **group attributes** rather than individual attributes (Grümme 2017). This has the negative potential to reproduce stereotypes, but it can also be a necessary tool to think about accessibility and barriers for different people – even though each person is more than just part of different social groups (e.g. a woman, a mother, someone with migration background). Taking group attributes into

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3   For basic information on Diversity Management and its origins, see e.g. Gonzalez and Zamanian 2015; Bendl, Hanappi-Egger and Hofmann 2012: 12–13; Aschenbrenner-Wellmann and Geldner 2021.

consideration might serve as an auxiliary structure, because it can help to imagine, research and spell out different perspectives.

DiM generally focuses on **underrepresented and marginalized groups**. For pragmatic and legal reasons, in organizational development it often focuses on those dimensions of diversity that are part of antidiscrimination law, like race/ethnicity, sex/gender, religion and worldview, disability, age or sexual identity (Bendl, Hanappi-Egger and Hofmann 2012: 12–14). But each organization has to decide which dimensions are especially relevant for exclusion and inclusion and which underrepresented groups are most painfully missing. It also has to reflect where diversity has to be limited due to organisational goals. At a university for example, a certain exclusion of people without sufficient school education might be necessary – but the university should still make sure that as few secondary attributes as possible have an influence on the educational outcome. The university can use DiM programmes to help ensure that people from non-academic families have equal opportunities, or that there are second-chance degree programmes for those who are only able to discover or follow their academic abilities at a later stage of life. In the same way, churches have to do with religion and worldview – they cannot promise that inclusion has nothing to do with these attributes, but they should make sure that no secondary attributes are decisive, like a religious family background or a certain degree of sociability.

DiM knows that a balance is needed between **diversity and cohesion** (see Aschbrenner-Wellmann and Geldner 2021: 202–4). For the cohesion, relationships need to be built, communication skills need to be trained, and a sense of unity and togetherness needs to be strengthened, in order to deal with a broad diversity. An organization, a team or a group needs a certain amount of cohesive and unifying dimensions. The question for a realistic approach to the diversity of a congregation is: How much difference can it include? How can the sense of unity and belonging be strengthened, without making too many assumptions about equity? And when does more diversity in one direction lead to less diversity in another, to losing some people while trying to include others? In my experience, no congregation (or any organization or group) can be inclusive for everyone. Trying to accommodate some people will put others off. A sensible approach for practical purposes might be to seek to expand from the status quo towards just some people who are a bit different (Hauschildt and Pohl-Patalong 2013: 351–3), but still have quite a few overlapping attributes with those who are already well integrated. A congregation could focus on just one or two group attributes that they want to accommodate – and use an intersectional approach for that. For instance, if a congregation already has lots of families with similar secondary attributes, it could try to remove barriers for single-parent

families[4] or reach out to international families. A tool for expanding diversity will be presented below.

DiM often combines two approaches: One is to work on a **general culture of openness and acceptance**, the other to work on the **accessibility and inclusion for certain groups of people** (Warmuth 2012). One approach might actually lead to the other, in both directions.

Growing a general culture of openness and acceptance in a congregation is a huge undertaking in itself. I can only give some basic ideas on relevant aspects and possible approaches here.

a. **Welcome and hospitality, especially for newcomers:** To naturally expect visitors and create processes for people who come for the first time is a helpful basis for DiM. Clear signage, a welcome team with people who live hospitality, slides or leaflets that help to follow the liturgy, a good cup of tea or coffee – these are just some practical aspects that might help to create a general atmosphere of hospitality in the congregation.

b. **General diversity within the staff and volunteer leadership**: Even before there are thoughts on specific diversity attributes, it is generally helpful if the staff and core volunteers do not all look and think alike. Men and women, different ages and family status, different styles and talents – if they respect and complement each other and are able to work well together, it can be a model and invitation for others.

c. **Appreciation of differences instead of rigid ideas about what's right and what's wrong**: If there is a sense that there is the one right style and tradition (and lots of wrong ones), the one right way to behave, the one right set of thoughts and beliefs – this is the opposite of a general culture of openness. Instead, differences and ambiguities can be communicated as a positive thing. Programmes and events can include a variety of styles of worship, music, language, use of media etc. A variety in behaviour, styles, opinions, beliefs within the core community creates space for more diversity. This openness and variety needs to be balanced with profile and orientation, but the balance should be reflected on and discussed carefully.

d. **Fewer assumptions**, less taking for granted that everyone thinks or feels or wants the same: Sometimes the use of "we" isn't inclusive, but shows how one approach or perspective is represented and others are neglected. To avoid that, different realities and perspectives should be reflected in sermons and other

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4   The barriers that a single parent family might face in a congregation are well described in Lange, 2022.

public communication – and the rhetoric should leave space for a listener to silently agree or disagree, to identify or not.

e. **Ease of faults and errors**: Openness and acceptance is also influenced and mirrored by the way a congregation deals with faults, errors and disturbances. How does the congregation react if there are apparent mistakes made in the music or the spoken words, if a baby cries right in the middle of a quiet time of reflection, if the pastor forgets the Lord's Prayer? How willing are leaders to let volunteers try out different tasks, even if the first steps aren't always totally satisfying? This again needs to be balanced with a certain quality and professional approach.

f. **Ability to find compromises and to deal with and resolve conflict**: Conflict management is a necessary competence when trying to create this culture of openness and acceptance without the risk of disintegration. If different styles, habits and opinions are encouraged to be in the open, it is all the more important that this is twinned with the willingness to find compromises, and a positive attitude towards conflict.

2 Practical approach: A Framework for fostering diversity in a congregation

To put some of the learnings from DiM into practice for local congregations, I have developed a framework with two parts: One is about raising awareness that (non) accessibility and exclusion go much further than one might think at first. The other is about areas of church activities where actual barriers can be found and removed. For both parts, ideas from research outcomes, policy papers and practical instruments[5] are combined, adapted and systematized.

2.1 Levels of accessibility and exclusion

While talking about diversity, a church leader once said to me: "But we don't exclude anyone! Everyone is welcome and can take part!" This is what most congregations want, and how they would describe themselves. To raise sensitivity for actual exclusion mechanisms, people first need to understand that there are different levels of inclusion and exclusion. The issue involves much more than a basic form of accessibility. For this purpose, a model of four levels of accessibility and exclusion is

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5   https://www.aktion-mensch.de/kommune-inklusiv/praxis-handbuch-inklusion/planung/partizipation, accessed on 29.04.2025 (for local civil communities), https://www.stifterverband.org/diversity-check, accessed on 29.04.2025 (for universities and research institutes), https://www.diakonie-vielfalt.de/, accessed on 29.04.2025 (for diaconal and similar organisations), https://www.serviceportal-nordkirche. de/gemeinde-leiten/vielfalt, accessed on 29.04.2025 (for churches, but little information yet).

introduced. On all four levels people can experience barriers. The levels build on each other, so if someone is excluded on the first level, he or she usually doesn't even get to the next. And yet, all of them are vital and crucial for full inclusion and participation.

a. There is a first level of **basic accessibility**. Can people actually find and reach the place? Can they get into the building? Is information available in a medium that they can receive? Are events or meetings at a time when they can possibly attend? On this level, we suppose that people actually want to attend. Typical barriers for this basic level of accessibility could be physical stairs to the building, no toilets, costly fees or that information is only distributed in print to members or only available digitally.

b. The second level is **understanding**. Of course, understanding itself can be basic or profound, but here I am talking about a quite basic understanding. It implies the acoustics, the language, the media used and any required prior knowledge. Typical barriers are the use of insider-language and specialist terms, a complicated grammar, thoughts that demand a lot of shared knowledge or experiences, or noisy surroundings or bad acoustics that make it hard for people with hearing aids. For internationals or migrants, an altogether foreign language might prevent understanding.

c. The third level is a **positive experience**. This implies basic accessibility and understanding, but demands more than that. It is about people feeling welcome and comfortable, about people liking the atmosphere, the programme, the aesthetics, the people around them. Typical barriers could be that people feel insecure about the do's and don'ts, that they feel uncomfortable with a room, that they feel bored or overwhelmed, that they feel left out in communication, or that they have to do things they don't feel comfortable with. On this level it does get really tricky, because different people are used to and like different styles and programmes, and the different demands might seem to exclude each other. Aiming for a mainstream approach might be one option, or, when working with an existing congregation, trying to make the experience more positive for those who are already there plus bearing in mind others that are somehow similar and somehow different, in order to broaden the diversity of those who could have a positive experience.

d. The fourth level is **belonging**. There are different forms and needs. Belonging can, on the one side, be to visit now and then and to feel at the right place when it happens. Or, on the other side, it can be to have personal contacts, be part of a group and to take ownership. What can stand in the way of belonging, if basic accessibility, understanding and a positive experience are given? Barriers could be the feeling that everyone is different from oneself, that one's own situation and concerns are never mentioned, or that one's own culture is not repre-

sented at all. Exclusion from certain volunteer positions, whether by rules or by soft factors, can also obstruct a full sense of belonging.
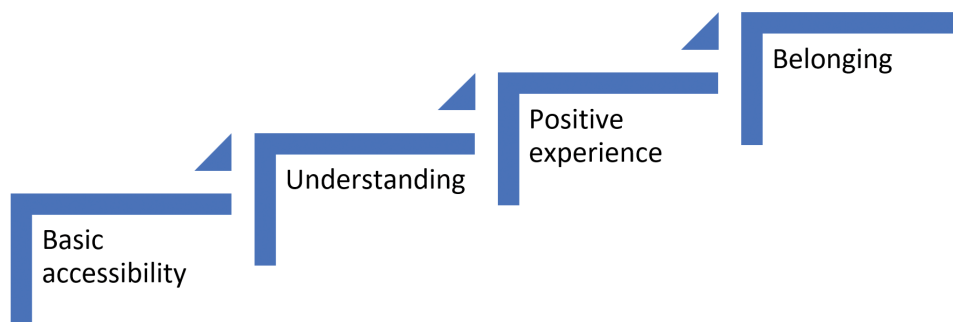
Belonging

Positive
experience

Understanding

Basic
accessibility

Diagram: Levels of accessibility and exclusion

2.2 Areas of accessibility

If a congregation wants to drive forward a process of diversifying, it is crucial to identify the things that put people off, make them feel unwelcome or prevent their participation – in short: the barriers that limit basic accessibility, understanding, a positive experience and belonging. These barriers are usually unintentional and often lie within habits and structures. To realize them is necessary if they are to be minimized.

Since no approach can fully remove barriers for everyone and some needs are even in opposition, I suggest to choose just a few group attributes to work with[6] How can such a choice be made? Maybe there are people who have already shown interest by visiting once or twice, but you feel it hasn't gone that well – in which dimension might they be different from others who are well included? Maybe some of the regular churchgoers have friends, family or other contacts in a specific milieu that isn't well represented in the congregation yet. Might that be a milieu to try to reduce barriers for? There might be longstanding members of the congregation whose health or family status has recently changed so that long-term illness or divorce might be a recent challenge, and a chance to think about those dimensions of diversity. Or there might be something in the local context that invites to choose a certain diversity perspective.

How can the actual barriers then be recognized? For illustration purposes, let us imagine that a congregation would want to expand their range of diversity to

6   Hauschildt and Pohl-Patalong (2013: 351–53) come to a similar conclusion regarding milieus.

be more accessible for international university students. They already attract native university students and want to diversify from there. The best way to spot barriers for international students would be to actually ask international students, especially if a few are already at the edges of the congregation. Another way would be that there might be bridge-builders in the congregation who work or live with international students and can put themselves in their shoes especially well. In addition to that, the leaders of the congregation should also try to take that perspective and to imagine different situations of congregational life from that perspective. Combining the different approaches and also hearing stories and reading research about other diversity groups might help to overcome the blindness that comes with routine and longstanding habituation.

For a structured approach, it is helpful to go through several **areas and aspects of the congregations' activities**. The following framework can be used for that.[7] It gives a structure of five areas of congregational activities: Information and public communication, buildings and times, content and culture of events and meetings, personal contacts and networks, and opportunities for participation and contribution. I give some ideas for each area, using the four levels of accessibility, and sometimes using examples of the group of international students for illustration. The question to ask for each area when using the framework is: What might be barriers for a group that you have in mind, and how can they be reduced?

a. **Information and public communication**: In this area, for basic accessibility and understanding the information needs to be easy to find, disseminated in the right places and channels, and available in an understandable language. For international students, who are often new to a town, online information with appropriate keywords and the use of English language would be basic features. For a positive experience, the design and choice of words matters – international students might like what is generally attractive for young, well-educated and globally mobile people. To open up for belonging, visual representation might be relevant. International students might feel less excluded if in the pictures there are young people and also ethnically mixed groups.

b. **Locations, buildings, times:** A traditional understanding of accessibility concentrates on physically disabled people and the appropriateness of entrance and facilities for them. But there are also other needs. For international students, basic accessibility could be hindered by inappropriate signage of and in the building, or by times of activities that don't fit with students' timetables. For inter-

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7   Some ideas are taken from guidelines on inclusion, on diversity management or on inclusive church services for specific groups. See e.g. Diakonie Deutschland 2019; Evangelische Kirche im Rheinland 2013; Bieler 2008; EKD 2015; Evangelische Kirche von Westfalen 2016; Kunz 2013.

national students, the concerns are probably more on the levels of positive experience and belonging – does the building feel welcoming and a safe space, does the interior design mirror the openness for their generation and cultures, do the rooms allow for different levels of participation, and does the congregation allow for not being strictly on time? For different groups of people, aspects like space, ventilation and temperature might be relevant, or lighting, acoustics and other things.

Another aspect worth mentioning is drinks and food. Although it is rarely relevant for basic accessibility and understanding, it can be vital for positive experience and belonging. It adds greatly to the surrounding and overall atmosphere, is crucial for hospitality and can have a strong inclusive impact. Drinks and food are closely connected with different cultures, milieus and generations – going the extra mile here to accommodate certain groups might be well worth it.

c. **Content and culture of events and meetings**: Depending on the type of event or meeting, different aspects come to mind. In a church service, understanding might be hindered for certain groups by unfamiliar or complicated language in songs, prayers and sermons. In addition, sometimes too much shared knowledge is required – about Christianity in general, but also about specific faith traditions or about the congregation. For international students, the altogether foreign language might have to be translated – which is easier if the original grammar, choice of words and lines of thought are easy to follow. For a positive experience and for belonging, it might help to address various senses and also to give different options to participate or to follow from a distance –intentionally opening the event for different levels of involvement might support diversity. Another important question is whether or not people's situations are mentioned in sermons and prayers: if people sense that the speakers only have other groups of people in mind, it might also make them feel excluded.

In church services, the music often has a strong impact on the experience of those who take part (see Ahrens and Wegner,2008: 36–9). There is no right or and wrong way of choosing between different styles of music, or mixing them, just as there is no right and wrong of a professional or amateur approach. Lots of conflicts arise around the choice of instruments and songs and volume. It is about culture, familiarity, faith traditions and personal theology. It seems to be closely connected to the dimension of belonging, and needs to be treated with great care.

All in all, if a diversity of people is involved in contributing to the event, it enhances the chances of representing a variety of perspectives and styles – at least if those who contribute are encouraged to bring their own preferences and thoughts to the table and act authentically.

d. **Personal contacts, networking and community**: In this area, opportunities for personal contacts and for experiencing a sense of community are fundamental. Different ways of interaction are helpful – not just the usual small talk at church coffee, but maybe also guided group discussions, communal meals, or joint activities. What is appropriate depends on the group of people a congregation wants to especially include. To foster diversity, the information about and access to joint activities and networking opportunities should be transparent and available via different channels. If there is a social gathering, the invitation should be clear; if there are digital networks or other structures where people can join to connect, they should be transparent and accessible. Personal contacts should, on the other hand, not be forced on anyone – if someone wants to come and go and not talk to anyone, that shouldn't make that person feel like an outsider. Respecting personal space or dealing sensitively with different perceptions of closeness and distance are also relevant.

Community isn't just about personal interaction though. Singing or praying together can in itself create the experience of community. Standing together for Holy Communion can create a feeling of togetherness and community. If this sense of community is not disrupted by some of the barriers mentioned above, and if a general atmosphere of welcome and openness is facilitated, that might sometimes even be worth more for a positive experience and a sense of belonging than lots of opportunities for personal interaction.

e. **Participation and contribution**: As much as inclusion is not just about the possibility to passively attend and be cared for, diversifying a congregation is about allowing and inviting different people to have an impact and leave their mark. The attempt to diversify needs the contribution of diverse people. If people are invited to attend, but not listened to and not appreciated for their gifts, it might be yet another form of exclusion. Obviously not everyone wants to participate in the same way, or even take on an active role in the congregation. But if attempts are discouraged or some volunteer positions are principally closed to a group of people, that can be a huge barrier for feeling welcome and for belonging (Barron 2016).

What can be done to open up for active participation and contribution and to foster diversity in this area? It is necessary to give opportunities to contribute with more or less time commitment. There might be situations where people can help or share spontaneously, whether carrying tables or putting forward their prayer requests. One-time activities like bringing food or taking part in a gardening day might be easily accessible. A mixture of short-term projects and long-term voluntary positions can serve different needs and living situations. Offering a variety of tasks and roles to include people with different gifts and preferences is also crucial. Communication and meetings for volunteers need to be barri-

er-free, just like public communication and events in general (see above). And last but not least, the ideal would be transparent information about possible contribution combined with personal approaches by someone who is good at getting to know people.

To work with these tools might seem complicated, but in fostering diversity, a congregation is dealing with a complex challenge. The different steps – choosing the group(s) they want to be easily and fully accessible for, understanding the different levels of accessibility, and getting hands-on in the different areas of their activities, can help to actually get a grip and start the process.

3   Concluding reflections

The presented framework wants to help practitioners to reflect and develop their own ideas for fostering at least one dimension of diversity in their local church. It has not been tested and evaluated yet. Research on the impact of using diversity checks and diversity-oriented frameworks for church development could be fruitful.

There are lots of open questions and critical reflections in my mind: Isn't the learning process of an organization far too complex to even suggest using this framework? Doesn't the process of linking this with the organisational vision and values deserve much closer attention? (see Warmuth 2012: 210). Isn't a professional process necessary, analysing the status quo, creating future goals and a strategy, implementing and evaluating this strategy? (Warmuth 2012: 210–30). Where should the resources in time and attention and emotional investment come from, when many local churches are struggling already? Still, the needs of churches deserve attempts to apply theories to practice, even though there are still open questions and reservations.

Last but not least: Any process of church development, whether diversity-oriented or with another approach, needs to be rooted in prayer and inspired by scripture. Dwelling in the image of Jesus and the early church, in God's calling of the marginalized and the perspective of heaven where all will feast together – that can encourage and enrich any diversity-oriented church development. When using the presented framework to grow the sensitivity for diverse perspectives, this rooting in prayer and scripture can help to balance the load of details and the demands for organizational activities with a spiritual approach and personal growth.

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