

Space for Grace | Results First Round – Programme Level Assessment Flanders

ACADEMIC CENTRE FOR PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

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INTRODUCTION

This study was done as part of the Space for Grace program. Sixteen respondents whose positions allow them a good overview of the church landscape in Flanders were asked at the beginning and the end of the four-year project about their views of renewal and revitalization in the church. Those interviews dealt with a number of sub-themes and the opportunities, obstacles, and examples they saw in that context. This is a preliminary, descriptive analysis of the first of the two sets of interviews, at the initial situation of Space for Grace. The respondents report opportunities, obstacles, and examples in the church and society that can be summarized in a number of categories. Here, we will discuss the categories briefly, and follow that up with some reflections and comments about the findings. This analysis still leaves many questions that can be researched further, both in Flanders and in comparison with similar research on an international level.

METHODOLOGY

INTERVIEWS

This study was done by means of semi-structured interviews. A list of topics served as a guide for the conversation in which the answers given by the respondents were explored more deeply. The interviews were conducted by an experienced but non-professional interviewer. A trial interview was conducted by means of the list of topics, and the comments about the interview made by this respondent were taken into consideration, and the list of topics was adjusted as necessary. The choice was made to take this trial interview into account in the analysis because of the possible valuable input of this respondent. The list of topics that was fixed after the trial interview was sent to the respondents beforehand, and they all signed a form of informed consent. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, after which they were analyzed as explained below. The final report was done in a way to hide the identity of the person behind specific statements.

ANALYSIS

After the transcription, the interviews were analyzed by means of the software program Nyivoll2. First, an a priori coding was done of segments of the interviews according to the interview questions,¹ given that respondents sometimes discuss subjects from previous or following questions while answering another question. After the first thematic coding, an open coding was done in which every piece of information was labeled that summarized that part of the interview.² Then an axial coding was done, in which codes were brought together on a higher level in categories and sub-categories that emerged for the researcher.³ No system of mutual exclusion was practiced here: the same piece of information could receive several codes in each phase.⁴ There was constant comparison during the analysis of the final four interviews, whereby the codetree that had been formed was adjusted according to the new information until the definitive theoretical model was settled.⁵ The categories from that model constitute the final structure within which the results below are reported.

SAMPLING

In total, we interviewed sixteen respondents. Nine of them were male, and seven female respondents. Respondents from all Flemish dioceses took part, even though the distribution was not completely balanced: three came from the Bruges diocese, two from the Ghent diocese, three from the

¹ Cf. Tom Decorte, “Kwalitatieve data-analyse,” in *Kwalitatieve methoden en technieken in de criminologie*, 3rd edition, ed. Tom Decorte en Damian Zaitch (Louvain/ The Hague: Acco, 2018): 463-512; p. 484.

² Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 482-483.

³ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 491-492.

⁴ Cf. Harry T. Reis and Charles M. Judd, eds., *Handbook of Research Methods in Social and Personality Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 321

⁵ Cf. Decorte, “Kwalitatieve data-analyse,” p. 486.

Antwerp diocese, two from the Hasselt diocese, and seven from the Mechelen-Brussels diocese. Eight respondents are active in the categorial work field, five respondents in the territorial and one in both. Three respondents are active in other fields: the editor of church media, someone employed in inter-diocesan services, and one in a Catholic educational institution.

Among the respondents active in the territorial work field are two bishops, a parish priest, four deacons, three vicars, an episcopally appointed delegate for diaconal work and charity, and one for local parishes. In addition, there are also vicarial individuals responsible for education, one for pastoral care in health care, and two for solidarity or diaconal work, and a staff member for pastoral care among young people. The respondents who are active in the categorial work field are a coordinator for pastoral care in prisons, a hospital chaplain, a youth chaplain, and a theologian in a care institution. Various respondents have several positions, with the result that more than 17 positions are represented by the interviewees.

The respondents base their answers on various sources that they claim to be informed about new or revitalizing initiatives in their diocese and other dioceses in Belgium. Primarily because of their positions in the church, a number of respondents have a good overview of revitalizing initiatives, other respondents base their views on their observations in their own parish, what they see in various classical or new media or via their personal network.

RESULTS

During the analysis, the answers of the respondents to the interview questions were merged into a number of categories. The themes are discussed in the order of the total number of respondents that indicate the categories for opportunity or obstacle or give examples that fall into the categories mentioned.

OPPORTUNITIES IN THE CHURCH

The respondents speak of nine categories in the church, in which opportunities, obstacles, and examples are cited. The total number of respondents who report a category in the interviews are indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Church Total

Category	Interview = Coded (17)
Diaconal work- total	17
Liturgy- total	17
Community building- total	17
Religious education- total	17
Organization- total	17
Image development- total	17
Spiritual care- total	16
Initiation and life transitions- total	15
Investing in people- total	15

a) DIACONAL WORK

A preliminary internal church domain where respondents see opportunities for renewal and revitalization is diaconal work. Respondents hold that there are possibilities in such service to modify the image of the church in society and to involve young people in the activities of the church. Moreover, they also reported that “charitable projects ... are very good at reading the needs of their environment.” Diaconal work is also one of the domains where respondents see opportunities for the social orientation of initiatives. It is claimed that diaconal work is a core task of the church, which is essential for the Roman Catholic tradition. Six respondents speak of filling in the hiatuses in society, the care for people

who slip through the cracks, whereas four respondents think that the church should also join projects carried out by non-church groups. The support and reception of refugees especially is mentioned as an area where the church could play more of a role, but ecology is also a domain cited in the interviews. One example of a hole that is not being filled by society is support for how refugees experience faith, something that receives no attention. In collaboration with other organizations and governments, there is possibly also an opportunity for renewal and for creating a critical mass in a bundling of strengths, although one respondent remarked that this is difficult sometimes because some organizations do not want to work with volunteers from the church. Diaconal work is mentioned as a domain that is expected to become more important and to receive more attention because of the consequences of COVID-19, especially in the area of economics.

Respondents see diaconal work not only as a task for the church but also as a possibility to make Catholic identity clear in the public forum. The embedding of initiatives in Catholic identity then becomes not a question of who owns the project but one of the identity of some actors. In collaboration with others, the Catholic church can thus claim a new place in the public space. One respondent, for example, says the following about meetings and training days with organizations from the social sector: “And I’m the only Catholic ...there. And there is nobody who looks at me strangely and says, ‘What are you doing here?’ The question then of course is what that means. I never believed in that project ‘Come and see’. Then I thought: What is there to see? There is nothing to see there. In [the project on transmigration] there is something to see. And I would like to take people with me. To show how Christ lives there.”

Possibilities are seen in diaconal work for spirituality and faith experience as well. Examining the motivation for dedication to this and the roots of the projects are particular examples given here. Respondents see possibilities in bringing people together who are active in diaconal work around spirituality or in creating spaces for rest and to talk. Finally, diaconal work can also stimulate community building. One respondent even sees that parishes that found it difficult to achieve unity are now connected with each other by the efforts of refugees: “They are anything but a pastoral unit; everyone is separate and the one is from this Church and the other from that Church. They have not been built up at all, and, with that project, it was the first time that people from one place worked with people from another.”

One respondent, however, finds that attention paid to diaconal work has taken up much too central a place in previous generations and thinks that belief needs the full attention of the church. For ten other respondents, diaconal service is just an important way to express and experience faith, and a shortage of attention for this and for the connection between faith and deeds stands in the way of the revitalization of the church: “If something like that does not occur, there will come a time when the community will die, right? That is actually what must happen, that is actually the heart of faith, faith must actually lead to engagement.”

In addition, respondents also make a number of critical remarks about what can be seen as obstacles in diaconal work. They state that service to others does not automatically form a church or that emphasis on relevance by diaconal work can stand in the way of renewal because of a kind of attitude of self-justification. Moreover, it is emphasized that the uniqueness of the church should not be forgotten in service and that too limited views of diaconal service as strictly a church activity constitute an obstacle for renewal and revitalization. Finally, there are a number of practical obstacles in diaconal service, in the form of complex legal frameworks, the limited network that the church still has, according to one respondent, and the possibility of asking too much of volunteers financially and with respect to time.

Table 2: Diaconal work

Diaconal work- opportunities	14
Diaconal work - obstacles	15
Diaconal work - examples and supplementations	15
Diaconal work - total	17

b) LITURGY

Another area where respondents see possibilities for renewal and revitalization is in the liturgy. An accessible and lived liturgy is cited as an opportunity for social orientation. Some possible ways in which liturgy can revitalize the church are indicated: one respondent says that inspiration can be drawn from charismatic movements, and the joy and spontaneity of foreign communities is also mentioned. Eight respondents think liturgy is a core task of the church in which something can be offered that is lacking in society. Lived liturgy is, according to them, essential to inviting new people to the church. They hold that it is necessary to first experience something before others can be invited to take part in that. The development of a contemporary liturgy that can speak to people is seen as an opportunity for revitalization, but other respondents see an opportunity in the ‘other’ of liturgy as something to be discovered anew by young people who have not grown up with it.

At the same time, liturgy is also seen as an obstacle to social orientation and revitalization. By a too one-sided focus on liturgy, which often clings to traditional forms, 11 of the 16 respondents think that many opportunities at revitalization have been missed. According to one respondent, people have been pushed too quickly to attend mass after becoming involved in a church project and then they quit. Moreover, there are also a number of practical obstacles concerning liturgy: people are busy, and for young families, it is difficult to find celebrations where they are welcome with their children. Because of COVID-19, celebrations are being organized online, which means a entire dimension is lacking in the celebrations because attention is focused completely on the priest, not much participation is possible, and especially because all aspects of liturgy with physical contact have been suspended..

Table 3: Liturgy

Liturgy- opportunities	15
Liturgy- obstacles	12
Liturgy- examples and supplementations	15
Liturgy- total	17

c) COMMUNITY BUILDING AND SOLIDARITY

The next church domain in which possibilities for renewal and revitalization are seen is working for the strengthening of community. Vital and warm communities are seen by 14 respondents as constitutive for a healthy church, and an opportunity to be attractive to non-church people, by, among other things, the contrast with individualism in other sectors of society and the need for solidarity they see. The broadening of the Sunday Mass with activities before or after to which the community is connected and involved with is, according to a number of respondents, an example of how that can be approached. Another example is the idea of a respondent to develop contemporary monastic forms in which people live in the midst of society yet form a community. A respondent sees small, intimate communities as a strength, while others aim for increasing the scale and larger, active communities.

According to respondents, the COVID-19 took away precisely the physical meeting that is so important for community building, which meant that new ways of being community have to be pursued. The importance of that physical community is even clearer because of that, and, according to some, the online and other forms of solidarity are only a shadow of the solidarity of a physical community, even though some respondents also expressed appreciation for the initiatives. Other obstacles that respondents see for community building are too much choice in leisure activities, the cultural Christianity of older generations that does not have much regard for community building around things such as the liturgy and sacraments of initiation, and the idea of faith as a private matter. A final obstacle that has to do with community is a too one-sided focus on the church internally, as a result of which opportunities of renewal and revitalization are missed.

Ten respondents also emphasize the traditional Catholic idea of ‘unity in difference’. They find that promoting diversity in communities, with respect to age, ethnicity, as well as views presents an opportunity to make the church more vital and attractive. People who see the church as a homogenous, unchanging given constitute, according to respondents, an obstacle to renewal and social orientation,

certainly when accompanied by the idea that the church is separate from society. This unity in difference is, according to respondents, an essential part of Catholic identity, which can thus be more visible to those outside: “That is not nothing in a society that is very individualistic and responds individually It also indicates something of the missionary zeal of the church, it brings new people in, I think. The image of the believer is thus indeed somewhat different from the old-fashioned or classical idea ... that they also involve people on the periphery, thus give a kind of inclusive message for people who are on the margins.” An example that is given is the growth in international communities that has gone counter to the custom of having various communities based on ethnicity in one city. In addition, projects that attempt to renew the church must also, according to them, respect the diversity of views of renewal and application in different contexts. The diversity constitutes an opportunity but can also be an obstacle because it is difficult to bring diversity together into one community. One respondent called the wish to quantify diversity a possible pitfall in that area, and the difficulty of differing, sometimes conflicting, needs are mentioned. One respondent also stated that one danger is the fact that diversity is experienced only in select communities and does not impact the church as a whole.

Finally for professionalization as well, community building offers an opportunity, according to one respondent, that holds that, in forming networks, existing initiatives can have more impact and expertise can be created and used. One obstacle to this, according to three respondents, is that the existing parish structures are antiquated and have a paralyzing effect. Collaboration and communication across projects is a suggestion that respondents make with respect to the Space for Grace program to use the means as optimally as possible and to generate an impact beyond the selected projects.

Table 4: Community building

Community building- opportunities	15
Community building- obstacles	15
Community building- examples and supplementations	8
Community building- total	17

d) RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Respondents also see opportunities for renewal and revitalization in what happens in religious education classes. Attention to spirituality especially can be given a place in that. According to respondents, people have many questions about meaning, and a church program in exploring faith can be started with people both in the church and outside it on those questions. For three respondents, a searching attitude is important here. According to them, people cannot be approached with the statement “This is the answer of the church, take it or leave it.” Rather, they should be guided in a searching way via the Catholic tradition in the exploration of their questions of meaning. An important theme here for respondents seems to be the experience of faith in daily life. In addition, a number of respondents also find it important within the church to do more than only do what they are told and experience it as they are told; they also want people to come to grips with their faith. The church can play a role in providing a language for their faith experience. Three respondents also emphasize the role the Bible can play in, for example, exhibitions or discussion groups.

COVID-19 has brought about a serious change in how religious education classes can be organized. A digital response has developed, which people can follow from their homes, and catechism has also been given another form, a digital one. In addition, in one respondent’s view, the need for personal faith experience, in addition to the communal forms of that experience, has become clearer since contact with the community almost completely disappeared.

A number of obstacles to faith development are, for example, the attitude of an older generation that has grown up with the idea that the church thinks for them and that they had to learn the catechism by heart. Respondents have also called the observation that the focus in the church is often not on God but on structures and questions about details an obstacle. Moreover, the interviews revealed a number of practical obstacles: the lack of time working people have, the hesitation in society in talking about spirituality and faith, and the lack of the needed intimacy when successful initiatives become too popular.

Table 5: Church Education

Religious education- opportunities	15
Religious education- obstacles	12
Religious education- examples and supplementations	12
Religious education- total	17

e) ORGANIZATION

Respondents see opportunities for renewal and revitalization on the organizational level. They seen those opportunities in, among other things, the reassessment of traditional forms of decision making and organization in the church: the synodical process and subsidiarity. First, the synodical process is, in the view of one respondent, a way to include the initiatives, knowledge, and ideas of laypeople on every level of the church in the decision-making process. Subsidiarity is the custom of implementing things on the appropriate level. Four respondents see possibilities particularly in the latter, by giving more tasks to volunteers or paid laypeople that can be carried out by them and keeping only the specific tasks of clergy and other professionals in the church for themselves. For that, it is necessary in their view to chart and use the knowhow of volunteers and to see where their interests and possibilities lie so that initiatives can be organized on that basis. Moreover, according to other respondents, work can be done on the training of other volunteers to make them more suited for carrying out certain tasks.

The idea of unity in diversity can also be brought up here. Six respondents indicate that renewal often happens on the margins of the church community and that these initiatives have to be completely included in the church. An innovative way of organization would, in their view, succeed in connecting the diversity to initiatives and also to keeping groups with a previous critical or minimal loyalty involved in the church: “Actually, the importance of unity and of coalition building. That you actually – what I just called – the broad church thinking in which you [have] people in different corners ... even ecumenical dialogue, interreligious dialogue, dialogue with culture ... that you actually bring people together around projects or themes. If we succeed in involving the diversity of people, to pull together as well, to be Church even though there are many tendencies and intuitions, etc.” Another respondent states that renewal must be a movement of the whole church and not only a few strong groups. Others hold that groups that have a very minimal church identity can better be let go and that the church can better concentrate on groups that choose for a Catholic identity without reservation. Also, it can be stated here that renewal is often not locally anchored: this presents the classical parish and diocese structure with a challenge in the organization of revitalizing tendencies. Collaboration thus seems to be important for these respondents, not only within the church but also with other agencies. This is not only an opportunity to build networks and thus to grow in expertise and impact but also an opportunity to disseminate the Catholic identity on the public forum (cf. *supra*). One respondent finds collaboration crucial with respect to what is happening in connection with COVID-19 as well. She offers to create a platform to share experiences and ideas concerning the approach to sharing the consequences.

Professionalism in the organization of initiatives is, in the view of respondents, an opportunity for revitalization. Respondents mention, among other things, adequate evaluation, financial management, conflict management, transparency and clarity in mission, vision, task description, a systematic approach like elements of professionalism, in addition to the elements mentioned in the interview questions. In addition, digital, theological, and spiritual expertise are also cited as necessary in the church. An opinion shared by a number of respondents is that professionalization should rather serve to guide the spontaneity of initiatives at renewal and not be an end in itself. Professionalization does not automatically lead to renewal or to reaching many people. Moreover, there is a risk if external professionals are involved who are often not completely aware of what the issues in the community are and have no vocation for their work. Finally, in one respondent’s view, it is also important to have sufficient practical experience and not just to come up with ideas “from behind a desk.”

According to respondents, obstacles on an organizational level are, among other things, the reluctance of clergy to change structures, specific routines that have become a matter of course, the parish structure that has become too limiting, possessiveness, and an atmosphere of competition around initiatives and projects, a shortage of self-reflection and the lack of sufficient professional staff.

According to one respondent, the heritage of the earlier organization of the church in which civic organizations provide their own structures and spiritualities for certain occupational groups, is an obstacle to uniting organizations that have largely fallen away.

Table 6: Organization

Organization- opportunities	16
Organization- obstacles	15
Organization- examples and supplementations	5
Organization- total	17

f) IMAGE FORMATION

The respondents then also mention actively working on the image of the church in society as an area with opportunities for renewal and revitalization. One respondent describes what he means as “new evangelization,” which, in his view, revolves around a way of being present rather than proclamation. Among other things, respondents talk about presence in an externally recognizable form that can stimulate dialogue with non-Christians and also talk about the verbal presence of declared Christians in the public forum.

Here, among other things, the importance of credible and humble discourse was underscored by seven respondents. Something that can help here is, in their view, the idea of Christianity as incarnational and thus always searching for how culture can be included in the Christian narrative. That is why a balance is necessary between guarding the uniqueness of the Christian tradition, which has always had an offensive element, and linking up with culture: “Thus we must be people of this culture and not people who put themselves outside of this culture, cutting themselves off from it. I find that extremely important On the other hand, but I’ve already said that as well, not losing our own identity by adapting to it.”

A number of other respects that can be part of the way in which the church is present in society are discussed above and below in a more detailed way. Respondents mention diaconal work, the relation between faith and knowledge, offering a language for spirituality that has a place in society, culture and heritage, the founding of spiritual centers, emphasizing the difference from the surrounding culture and marking out the limits of certain discourses in that society, the church which is once more unfamiliar to young people, and the challenge of the sometimes negative image of the church as opportunities to take up presence in society. These points are looked at more closely in previous and following sections of this text. COVID-19 was, according to one respondent, a missed opportunity to show the relevance of the church through presence, though other respondents reported that the church was given positive treatment in the media and that spiritual care is certainly more valued now. Another opportunity is found, according to one respondent, in the “reverse” missionization that is now taking place and gives an international and rejuvenated character to Christian communities.

A number of specific forms of professionalism that have not yet been mentioned are important in this presence in society. These revolve around the communication of faith and the development of a multilingualism in various contexts.

Finally, a number of obstacles can also be cited in being present in society. The first is, according to respondents, the tendency displayed by some to want to isolate themselves from society as church. But wanting too much to adapt to public opinion also forms an obstacle, according to respondents. Another obstacle is the image of the Catholic Church and that people outside it do not know what it has to offer. The respondents regard the fear regarding speaking about faith to be an obstacle as well. Moreover, the distance between culture – in which, according to one respondent, there is little transcendence and solidarity – and the church whose language in one respondent’s view, is not comprehensible is an obstacle to the presence of the church in society. Finally, with one of the respondents, the question can be raised as to whether there is demand for what the church supplies. Two other respondents state in connection with this that there are perhaps unconscious questions that only surface when the supply is present.

Table 7: Image

Image- opportunities	14
Image- obstacles	16
Image- examples and supplements	10
Image- total	17

g) SPIRITUAL CARE

A following domain where respondents see opportunities is in spiritual care. Respondents believe that this represents something the church can offer to society's need for meaning, for which there is certainly more attention in care institutions. In one respondent's view, spiritual care can also provide an example of how diversity can be approached: pastors speak, after all, with people who have a different spiritual experience than themselves and attempt to help them as much as possible from the others' perspective while grounded in their own spirituality. Pastors also produce possibly pioneering work in their communications with official agencies because they are intensively involved with other caregivers and those in charge have to work together. Finally, according to one respondent, caregivers also have a good view of the needs of people because they are embedded in facilities. Spiritual caregivers can also serve as an example of a form of professionalism that, in one respondent's view, is important for all initiatives at renewal: the sensitivity to spiritual needs and questions and being grounded in one's own spirituality. In addition, one respondent also sees a large degree of professionalism in general among pastors: "since I have plunged deeper into the world of categorial pastoral work ... particularly in pastoral care, there is a degree of professionalism present that is often lacking elsewhere. That has to do with the embedding in that hyper-professional and sophisticated environment of care today."

In connection with COVID-19, respondents also see a number of evolutions in spiritual care. First, the offer of digital services are very quickly updated, in collaboration with the facilities. In addition, attention is also given to spiritual care, and more appreciation has arisen for the work of spiritual caregivers, partly through the greater need for their presence.

According to respondents, there are also a number of obstacles to renewal and revitalization of the church. A first example is the practice of 'general' spiritual care, which denies the identity of pastors. A second problem is the lack of continuity in care after the treatment in the care facility. One example of a project that works around this is integrated care, which offers transmural spiritual care so that people are not constantly seeing different caregivers or suddenly lose all care. One respondent also finds that parish communities should be more involved in spiritual care in order to create continuity of attention from the church for these people. Another obstacle is the shortage of professionals. Vacancies for spiritual caregivers are not being filled, and there are few people following that course of study. A final obstacle is the image of the church, which is perceived as negative or is simply unknown. Because of that, people are not coming as quickly into contact with pastors. According to one respondent, however, this can be an opportunity when a meeting with a pastor effectively takes place, certainly if that is a younger pastor, by the surprise effect of breaking through prejudices.

Table 8: Spiritual care

Spiritual care- opportunities	14
Spiritual care- obstacles	11
Spiritual care- examples and supplementations	7
Spiritual care- total	16

h) INITIATION AND LIFE TRANSITIONS

How initiation and life transitions are dealt with is also seen as providing opportunities by respondents for renewal and revitalization. Two respondents believe that altering the initiation sacraments can renew the church. The postponement of the initiation sacraments and reviving the use of the catechumenate can, according to one respondent, make faith more a matter of growth and personal encounter with Christ. Involving the parents and the local community more in the initiation celebration are cited as opportunities for revitalization. One obstacle to this is the fact that both clergy and laypeople continue to baptize babies shortly after birth without the presence of the local community. The preparation for confirmation is, according to some respondents, also more directed at restoring the old than to renewal.

In addition, six respondents also see opportunities in the discussion with people on the meaning of life transitions like birth, marriage, death, and guidance in connection with these transitions through, for example, spiritual care and rituals. The form of rituals, in the view of some respondents, does not have to be limited to traditional practice, especially in providing supplementary rituals. They also see an important role for the church on the social level in connection with COVID-19,

Tabel 9: Initiation and life transitions

Initiation and life transitions- opportunities	15
Initiation and life transitions- obstacles	12
Initiation and life transitions- total	15

i) INVESTING IN PEOPLE

Finally, in 15 of the 16 interviews, it was stated that paying attention to people is an opportunity for renewal and revitalization. Paying attention to young people and innovative leadership in particular are given as examples. Investing in activities and platforms for young people is seen as presenting opportunities for revitalization. Proposals are made for projects where young people can take initiatives themselves and are supported by youth organizations that already exist. Opportunities are also seen in that for paying attention to spirituality. Both the view that young people themselves should be listened to in particular and that Catholicism should be presented to young people as new and something to be discovered is conveyed in the interviews.

Investing in people, regardless of age, is seen by the respondents as a step toward revitalization. They talk about educating volunteers, the support of initiatives in the areas of finance, practice, administration, or spirituality, announcing and using professionals in the support of initiatives outside the territorial structures, and tapping as much as possible into the potential of volunteers regarding their specific knowhow. Three respondents think it is necessary to allow the experiment for the sake of renewal and that people are given the right to fail. They propose that investing in a broad range on social orientation and spirituality in order to address as many people as possible is important.

Finally, investing in leadership is, according to seven of the respondents, also a possibility for vitalizing the church. There are many examples not only of priests who breath new life into local parishes but also of laypeople who come up with innovative initiatives. One respondent thinks that COVID-19 will speed that process up because new forms of faith experience arise that are less dependent on clergy.

The interviews showed various views of the relationship between giving leadership to volunteer groups and top-down management. One respondent holds that leadership should be completely surrendered to volunteers and that the formal structures should be there only to offer support when the volunteers themselves ask for it. Others, however, hold that it is necessary to have top-down management, which stimulates continuity, a clear direction, and professionalism.

Investing in people also entails a number of obstacles to renewal and social orientation. First, the ageing group of people who are involved in the church is cited. According to some respondents, connected to that is also the clinging to old structures and an adverse attitude to change. A respondent states that there is also a danger that the focus will be more on quantity than quality. In the view of another respondent, there is also a problem with respect to leadership, given that there is no overview

of the potential of volunteers. According to another respondent, many professionals in the church take on work themselves whereas they could actually involve many people by leaving tasks to volunteers. Moreover, an obstacle has formed, in the observation of a respondent, in that by leaving the initiative to volunteer groups without building any connection between them has resulted in a splintered field of projects that have limited impact. Another obstacle is that, in pursuing attention for those involved, possible initiatives arise that are targeted at the happiness of the group itself but show no social orientation. Also, in the view of one respondent, the spiritual dimension is sometimes lost to view, in pursuing rejuvenation. Finally, there are also a number of practical obstacles in investing in people: the group of people available is smaller, the low salary for positions in the church, and a shortage of professionals, the limited time of professionals and volunteers to enroll in training courses, and a lack of taking competence into account when selecting people.

Table 10: Investing in people

Investing in people- opportunities	14
Investing in people- obstacles	14
Investing in people- examples and supplementations	10
Investing in people- total	15

OPPORTUNITIES IN SOCIETY

Respondents see opportunities in society for renewal and revitalization in the church in a number of processes and tendencies, and a number of points of contact that they think the church can respond to. Table 11 shows an overview of the number of respondents who mention the categories in the interviews. The discussion of the categories will be done again according to the number of respondents who mention them.

Table 11: Society total

Category	Interview = Coded (17)
Secularization- total	17
Decentralization- total	16
Pluralization- total	16
New media- total	16
Professionalization- total	16
Interest in spirituality- total	14
Globalization- total	13
Culture and heritage- total	13
Individualization- total	12
Rationalization- total	12

a) SECULARIZATION

A first domain in which respondents saw opportunities for renewal and revitalization in the church is the secularization of society. Secularization can be seen as a decrease in the significance of religion in society by an entirety of three processes: differentiation, or the taking over of tasks traditionally carried out by the church by individual subsystems in society, rationalization or the

decrease of the influence of religion on society in favor of science and technology, and the socialization or disappearance of traditional communities and the transference of religion to the private sphere.⁶

These three processes are clearly palpable in the Catholic Church. In the interviews, respondents mentioned a number of consequences of this. One result of the third process, the decrease in the number of people who are traditionally religious in the community has the consequence that the remaining Catholics are a disproportionate group of elderly people. According to respondents, they have insufficient feeling for contemporary issues in society and too much desire the restoration of the church they once knew to be renewed. Because of the low number of believers in many places, there is also no true community where interested people can be welcomed. The hesitation to speak about spirituality and religion that two respondents mention can be incorporated here. A possible consequence of the second process can be that Catholic organizations give up their Catholic identity or give it minimal content. That what the Church has to offer is unknown can have something to do with this. Finally, according to four respondents, the church still has the negative image from the time that society was still dominated by the church. One of them finds that a number of people correspond to that image, given that they hope to be able to take up that role in society again.

Secularization, however, does not only have negative consequences. According to the respondents, that evolution also contains a number of opportunities, especially the crumbling of existing church structures, which, in their view, allows experimentation with innovative initiatives. The church can thus choose completely to go in search of what its identity and role in society can be in this context. Because faith is no longer something that is self-evident and omnipresent, believing is also a more deliberate and reflective choice, and the critical and offensive aspects of the tradition can be given more room. Finally, because the Catholic tradition is unknown to some young people, it can be rediscovered by them in a candid way. This offers all kinds of opportunities to take up a new role in society and to address new groups.

Respondents also see an opportunity to be present in society in a new way also in their approach to the buildings and structures that the church has to let go of. Making churches multifunctional is, in one respondent's view, more faithful to the tradition in which churches fulfilled various functions. The conclusion that some organizations have outgrown the church can, in the eyes of one respondent, also be viewed positively: it is not for nothing that those organizations have become large and can now be possible partners in joint activities. One respondent also stated that the social projects of the church have been completely taken over by society, and that the church must now completely apply itself to where society falls short: faith. Other respondents find, however, that the church must continue to take action where society comes up short.

Another opportunity in secularization lies, however, in the attitude of believers within the church. According to Grace Davie, there is a growing tendency of what she calls "vicarious religion," leaving to others the responsibilities that belong to membership in a religious community;⁷ the shortage of priests provides an impulse, in one respondent's view, for laypeople to assume responsibility themselves because they are now sometimes faced with the choice of closing their parish or taking control themselves.

A number of obstacles in the use of those opportunities in secularization also emerge in the interviews. First, there is too little emphasis on Catholic identity, through which the church has become unrecognizable and there is no longer anything that following generations can acquaint themselves with. One respondent commented that many organizations want the advantages of church support but to be connected as little as possible with the name of the church. The earlier image of the church also stands in the way of the church speaking in public. The fact that the church is unknown can also be an obstacle, according to some respondents, because few people are reached by its offer. In the view of one respondent, believers are also sometimes isolated because of the fact that there are few believers in their immediate surroundings. Finally, there is the statement of two respondents that few people have completed the mourning process of losing the old form of the church. In their view, that first has to happen before a new form can be conceived.

⁶ Cf. Roy Wallis and Steve Bruce, *God is Dead: Secularization in the West* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), pp. 8-9.

⁷ Cf. Grace Davie. *Religion in Britain: A Persistent Paradox* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2015).

Table 12: Secularization

Secularization- opportunities	17
Secularization- obstacles	17
Secularization- total	17

b) DECENTRALIZATION AND PLURALIZATION

The next area where respondents see opportunities for renewal and revitalization is in the tendencies toward decentralization and pluralization. Decentralization is “the transfer of sovereign decision and performance competences to autonomous or partly autonomous sub systems,”⁸ and pluralization is the disappearance of a unity perspective in which various perspectives and value systems are seen as being of equal value.⁹

Decentralization can be found primarily in the comment of one respondent that vitalizing projects are not always locally anchored. One example of this is Godly Play, a method that brings renewal that does not have one controlling center or the formation of online *communities* that are not subject to central control. How the non-anchored initiatives can be integrated into the church is said to be a growing challenge for church structures.

Furthermore, respondents also see possibilities in dealing with a pluralized context. A preliminary way in which that can be dealt with is by linking up with networks that work with a specific theme. That yields more possibilities for operating in society with a clear Catholic identity and to generate more impact than if the church works only out of its own structures. Another option is to be the host itself of pluralist projects, whereby people with other perspectives are engaged to work in projects with a Catholic identity. This openly going beyond the boundaries of the church is, according to one respondent, something that is unique to the Christian identity, an aspect of that identity that can be placed in the foreground. Some respondents also hold that grace is not only to be found in the church and that a vital church also takes into account developments and initiatives on the boundaries of or outside the church.

Pluralization also entails a number of obstacles. First is the resistance to pluralization from within the church through identity thinking and the inclination of people to isolate themselves from society. It is also claimed that there is no real mentality of collaboration in the church, which makes it difficult for pluralist projects. In addition, there is also a danger in putting oneself too much in the background and thereby losing the uniqueness of the church. Finally, the image of the church in society is also an obstacle in pluralistic collaboration.

Table 13: Decentralization and pluralization

Decentralization- opportunities	14
Decentralization- obstacles	14
Decentralization- examples and supplementations	3
Decentralization- total	16
Pluralization- opportunities	14
Pluralization- obstacles	16
Pluralization- examples and supplementations	3
Pluralization- total	16

⁸ Jürgen Rüländ, (1993): “Politisch-institutionelle Reformen und Dezentralisierung: Thesen zum Forschungsstand,” in *Subsidiarität in der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit: Dezentralisierung und Verwaltungsreformen zwischen Strukturanpassung und Selbsthilfe*, ed. Klaus Simon, Albert Stockmayer und Harald Fuhr (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1993), 181-193, p. 18 in Katharina Mewes, *Decentralization: On the Example of the Yemeni Water Sector* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2011), pp. 53-75.

⁹ Cf. Lieven Boeve, *Onderbroken traditie: Heeft het christelijk verhaal nog toekomst* (Kalmthout: Pelckmans, 2008), pp. 47-49.

c) NEW MEDIA

A number of opportunities were mentioned in connection with new media. In the view of one respondent, for instance, social media are an opportunity to allow young Christians to be heard. According to them, a movement in general toward more digitalization in the church can be seen, which has been accelerated by COVID-19. Respondents find that there is less time wasted through online meetings and working at home, and that people, and new groups as well, can be reached in a different way through the growing online supply of religious education and liturgy. The remark is also often made, however, that digitalization entails the absence of a dimension of physical encounter, leading to the experience of a lack.

Responding to opportunities in new media requires specific skills, a requirement that constitutes part of the profile of professionalism in the interviews. The lack of attention to and expertise in this forms, according to respondents, an obstacle to renewal and social orientation.

Table 14: New media

New media- opportunities	15
New media- obstacles	13
New media- examples and supplementations	3
New media- total	16

d) PROFESSIONALIZATION

The next development in which respondents see opportunities is professionalization. Professionalization entails that religion can have influence because knowledge and expertise have become more important. Tasks like education or care for the sick are no longer carried out by religious but by people who are qualified for that purely through their education.

For nine respondents, it is clear that the church falls short with respect to knowledge, expertise, and professionalism. They find that there is insufficient guidance for projects and changes, sometimes bad financial management, that the quality of the education of volunteers and clergy is too low, or that there is a lack of clarity in vision. In addition, they also hold that cumbersome structures often stand in the way of professionalism, that there is too little attention paid to competence in recruiting, insufficient critical reflection and too little use made of the potential of volunteers. Finally, there is also a shortage of manpower, and especially young professionals. All these points form, in their view, obstacles to renewal as well as to the social orientation and the relevance of the church, care for the spiritual dimension of initiatives and the confidence that projects radiate.

More attention for professionalism can thus, among other things, improve the image of the church, increase the impact and effectiveness of initiatives, and help avoid misuse. According to respondents, professionalism is not limited to people who do something professionally. Volunteers can also meet criteria for professionalism. That is why respondents find it important to use the talents and expertise of volunteers, as well as their education and training. Moreover, volunteer groups and initiatives should be properly incorporated by the available professionals into the church through coaching, financial, and administrative support, help in the clarification of the vision and task descriptions and the systematic approach to projects, the stimulation of reflection and evaluation. According to one of the respondents, one obstacle to this, however, is that volunteers are not used to their work being put into a system and very quickly view it as control. In working with paid professionals, a respondent states, it is also better sometimes to offer support and a platform to active professionals who are connected to the church, instead of filling in the job descriptions themselves and writing out advertisements for vacancies. Other respondents see an opportunity in enlisting external professionals without any connection to the church, to involve new people in the church and possibly to help them discover their own vocation.

A number of other aspects of professionalization that those respondents find important are, among others, liturgical, theological, and spiritual professionalism. Professionalism in the church means, according to them, that liturgy is also done in such a way that it speaks to people and completely

stands in the tradition, that there is a clear theological underpinning of the initiatives and that people pay attention in an appropriate way for their own spirituality and that of others. The creation of positions next to those of the priest through which people can consult theological professionals, in the view of one respondent, is also a shortcoming in what the church has to offer. According to respondents, there must also be professionalism in the area of communication by, for example, respect for confidentiality of information, digital expertise, and the adjustment of language to different contexts. Personal training is also important, according to respondents, together with sufficient self-care and inspiration. A possible aid in the professional approach to initiatives is, in the respondents' view, the forming of and joining networks. Another possibility is to take the position in the receiver's position in order to get better insight.

Professionalization also has a negative side, however, according to respondents. The professional approach to initiatives does not mean that someone automatically does this in an inspired way and that projects will of themselves have a renewing effect and reach people. Professionalism can turn into rigidity, if it is a goal in itself. That is why respondents also find it important that there is a constant balance between professionalism and the spontaneity of initiatives, the necessary warmth and inspiration of the actors. One respondent holds that faith revolves around volunteers and that that should not be taken over by professionals. The outsourcing of diaconal work to organizations, for example, is cited as an obstacle to a holistic experience of faith. Another respondent also states that too much money goes into research that is not translated into practice. Finally, a number of respondents also state that there must be room for experiment and thus also for failure, which does not seem professional at first glance.

Table 15: Professionalization

Professionalization- opportunities	13
Professionalization- obstacles	15
Professionalization- examples and supplementations	13
Professionalization- total	16

e) INTEREST IN SPIRITUALITY AND THE ATTRIBUTION OF MEANING

Another opportunity that respondents see on the social level is the growing interest in spirituality and the attribution of meaning, an interest that, according to the respondents, has increased even more because of COVID-19. Five respondents find that the Catholic Church has to attempt to find intersections with spiritualities that are popular but should not lose sight of the uniqueness of Catholic spirituality. Respondents see possibilities for that in, for example, introducing Christian meditation as a response to the general interest in meditation or even experiencing Christian spirituality oneself and inviting others to do so. That can, for example, be done through the use of monasteries and abbeys as spiritual centers where people can experience it. But it can be done in other activities as well, and an atmosphere can be created in which there is room for spirituality, which would remove the discomfort in speaking about this.

Another opportunity is the increased attention for spirituality in care. In addition to spiritual care, pluralistic meditation rooms in hospitals that are clearly run on the basis of Christian 'hospitality' is, in one respondent's view, an opportunity to introduce Christian spirituality. The liturgical communities that have arisen around some hospitals and the openness of care providers are opportunities for Catholic spirituality in the care sector. According to respondents, other points of contact are, moreover, also the spiritual dimension of ecological movements and the need for the experience of spirituality in daily life.

It can be stated on the basis of interviews that, among all the ways to reach out to the growing interest in spirituality, it is also important – in addition to paying sufficient attention to Christian spirituality – to develop a sensitivity to spiritual issues and questions among other people. One way to work on this is to be a 'recipient' of spiritual care oneself in education programs. Furthermore, it is also important to take the complexity and diversity of spiritual issues into account.

According to respondents, certain projects respond to this quite well. According to respondents, there is still a lot of room for growth in this offer. A number of obstacles to this are the lack of training, the tendency for the church isolate itself from society, and the clinging to classical language about spirituality and without attempting to make it understandable to outsiders. One respondent also finds that there is a lack of space in which spirituality can be experienced and learned. Moreover, the negative image of Catholicism is also an obstacle, although one respondent also sees an openness arising that transcends the hostile attitude to Catholicism. The lack of courage to speak about spirituality is an obstacle according to respondents, just as the large diversity of spiritual experience within the Catholic Church and of spiritual questions outside the church, which leads to a lack of clarity. Needs are also often unclear, and it is only clear in retrospect that something answered a need or not. One problem that respondents see in popular forms of spirituality is, as reported earlier, that they are too self-absorbed and difficult to reconcile with Catholic spirituality. The lack of time to think about things is also criticized by respondents

Table 16: Interest in spirituality

Interest in spirituality- opportunities	14
Interest in spirituality- obstacles	13
Interest in spirituality- examples and supplementations	7
Interest in spirituality- total	14

f) GLOBALIZATION

Another development to which the respondents refer is globalization. Respondents see possibilities in the idea of Catholic identity as a global identity that is incarnated in various cultures. According to one respondent, the unity transcends ethnic differences, and, in a globalized world – in the view of five respondents – the division between ethnic communities must be given up. They think communities should celebrate together or be connected in other ways. One example a respondent gives of this is the Saint Quentin community, a community in Louvain where people with various migration backgrounds and people without any migration background form a community together. One respondent also sees opportunities in the European community of Brussels to bring different church communities together.

Those global communities should meet, in one respondent's view, a social need for international solidarity. A respondent commented, for example, that he sees that young people often feel more connected with the world church than with their own local parish. That need, according to one respondent, has increased and become clearer because of COVID-19, given that the pandemic affects everyone.

Respondents also see possibilities in globalization for a revitalization of liturgy by including elements from other cultures in the liturgy that would radiate more vitality. One respondent sees another opportunity in the priests who come from other continents to Belgium. He thinks that a kind of exchange system in which priests from Belgium also go to the regions in question can be enriching for the church.

Globalization also presents a number of obstacles. First, there is the difficulty of organizing diversity in a good way. There are major differences in needs and views, and it is difficult to include them all in one church community. In addition, there is also the view that Catholicism as it takes shape in the Belgian context is Catholicism itself, which means that other cultural embeddings of Catholicism are given no place. The limiting factor of the local parish structures are also cited as something that stands in the way of global solidarity.

Table 17: Globalization

Globalization- opportunities	13
Globalization- obstacles	11
Globalization- total	13

g) CULTURE AND HERITAGE

Respondents also see opportunities for revitalization and social orientation in the local culture and cultural heritage, more specifically in the presence of elements in it that refer to Christianity. They give the examples of art guides who speak explicitly of spirituality and art, church buildings that can be opened to let people become acquainted with the meaning and function of those buildings or the Catholic history of care institutions and methods like the approach to presence. In addition, they also see possibilities in affecting and negating the prejudices about the church in society.

There are also some obstacles in heritage and culture. A first obstacle is the resistance to the movement toward the scaling-up of parishes through the value that is attached to church buildings, given that they were let go by the movement for repurposing.

Table 18: Culture and heritage

Culture and heritage- opportunities	13
Culture and heritage- obstacles	11
Culture and heritage- examples and supplementations	1
Culture and heritage- total	13

h) INDIVIDUALIZATION

Another tendency where respondents see possibilities and obstacles for revitalization and renewal of the church is individualization. Individualization is the process in which individuals no longer receive their identities but have to construct them themselves.¹⁰

Respondents see opportunities in the observation that people do not want to follow just any leader. That makes the view that, according to one respondent, the priest is the leader of the community and the laypeople follow him and carry out his decisions is outdated. But that also leads to more motivation for laypeople to take the initiative themselves. It can be an opportunity to involve more people and to give them a platform for the renewal they have in mind.

At the same time, four respondents find that individualization also has limits that require the attention of the church communities. An example that one respondent gives is the idea of autonomy that, in his view, has a number of dark aspects. Another respondent states that church communities can also offer a counterbalance to individualization on a less intellectual level by striving for inclusive community formation.

Another consequence of individualization is that someone's identity is not just pre-given but must be actively constructed. This is a structural task that people are confronted with in which there is a great deal of uncertainty and lack of clarity. According to respondents, the church could take advantage of this by actively applying itself to identity formation but not in an authoritarian, ready-made way. A searching Catholic identity that is incarnated in contemporary culture is, according to respondents, an opportunity to approach people in that task of identity construction.

Individualization also entails a number of obstacles. In particular, the respondents mention self-absorbed views of spirituality and faith in which there is little room for solidarity with others or with God on that level and the idea that faith belongs to the private realm.

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Table 19: Individualization

Individualization- opportunities	12
Individualization- obstacles	12
Individualization- total	12

¹⁰ Cf. Lieven Boeve, *Onderbroken traditie*, pp. 46-47

i) RATIONALIZATION

A final characteristic of the (late-)modern society in which respondents see possibilities is rationalization. Rationalization entails, as already stated, that religion has lost influence in society in favor of science and rationality (cf. *supra*).

In response to rationalization, respondents state that it is important to have a credible message as church and to present it in a coherent way. A more specific opportunity that one respondent sees in rationalization is the demonstration of the possibility to reconcile rational thinking and faith. He sees examples of this in well-known scientists who are explicitly believers and wish to be involved in this topic in communication between Christians and non-Christians.

An obstacle that respondents see in the area of rationalization is the lack of reflection on faith in the church. The generation that grew up with the catechism is certainly, according to one respondent, simply repeated standard beliefs and attitudes and do not reflect on faith themselves. Finally, the perception of Catholicism in society in the area of rationalization is an obstacle: Catholicism is often seen, according to respondents, as a tradition of commandments and prohibitions, as oppressive, and as having an immature concept of God.

Table 20: Rationalization

Rationalization- opportunities	12
Rationalization- obstacles	12
Rationalization- examples and supplementations	1
Rationalization- total	12

CONCLUSION

After this overview of the analysis of the interviews, a number of tensions and questions remain. A number of tensions in the way in which initiative is being taken to renew and revitalize the church are discussed. These tensions require reflection by those who are active in this area.

COMMUNITIES AND SOLIDARITY

The first question that can be stated is what this now means for a vitalizing community formation. What characteristics does a vitalizing, Catholic community have? And can it be seen as a Catholic community? Here, for example, the role of liturgy and initiation is a topic on which different perspectives can be found in the interviews. Liturgy and initiation can stand at the center but also have more of a marginal meaning. Some find liturgy an opportunity, while others find it an obstacle to revitalization. The question can also be asked here as to which liturgy is at issue here, and to what degree liturgy must be renewed to speak to people. Care and effort can also be both central in the formation of community and bringing people together. But, according to other respondents, it is less important or even an obstacle to revitalization. The question of where the accent is placed on forming communities that renew and are revitalizing is a subject that must be reflected on thoroughly.

The respondents also cite various forms of solidarity in a community. That concerns the sense of connectedness that physically meeting others gives, but certainly after COVID-19 other forms of feeling connected are being explored, on digital platforms for example. The mention of young people who feel more connected with the 'world church' can refer to other forms of solidarity, which is sometimes experienced physically but can also be abstract. The question of what is lacking and can be added in the experience of community like the local church community or in a different way is a question that can be explored further.

CATHOLIC IDENTITY

When precisely a community can be called a Catholic community remains an open question. In general, a middle position is taken in which a certain measure of involvement in the tradition and the church structures and an openness to experiment and approach society are important. But what is

minimal involvement then? The respondents were not immediately agreed on whether it is necessary to make a clear demarcation of Catholic identity. Some find that there must be as much room as possible while others think that there should be a clear connection to the tradition, but what the connection then entails also remains an open question. The tension between a Catholic identity and inculturation within initiatives can be thematized. The most respondents take a kind of in-between position here, in which they find a balance between both important. Connected with this is the idea that the church has to enter the outside world in a searching way, in a humble way. Others hold, however, that the Catholic tradition is something fresh that young people can discover again and thus the connection with culture must be sought less. How a position is taken in this area can be determinative for how communities form.

THE ORGANIZATION OF RENEWAL

There are different opinions as well on the organization of renewal in the church. Some think that that should occur top-down, in which unity and solidarity can be introduced into the renewal, whereas others emphasize a more spontaneous, grassroots movement. That seems to indicate the tension between wanting to organize projects directed at a certain target group or to give a platform to the target group to organize itself and the emphasis on the image of church in society as negative and to be corrected, or primarily unknown and still to be discovered. The various ways in which people can work on this have advantages and disadvantages. Top-down approaches and organizing the renewal from the top down have the advantage of controllability and unity, where a grassroots approach in which people on the ground are given a platform can offer more room for creativity and broad support. It can be good to reflect thoroughly here when choosing an approach.

VULNERABLE GROUPS AND INCLUSION

Another theme is the role vulnerable groups play in the respondents' reflections on vital communities. The role of parents is, for example, ambiguous. Respondents sometimes express themselves very negatively about older generations as those who stand in the way of renewal but at the same time diversity in the area of age is also seen by some as something positive. A challenge in renewal thus seems to be keep the elderly involved also. Another group that is the object of an ambivalent issue are people with a migration background. On the one hand, they are mentioned in the interviews as in need of aid but also as full members of diverse communities. There as well is a challenge for diaconal attention for people with a migration background and involving such people completely in church communities. Another question is how the idea of communities as connected in diversity can be used, taking the possible obstacles there into account. The way in which vulnerable groups and diversity is approached is important in order to arrive at complete inclusion and also to be able to enjoy the advantages of diversity.

THE DEFINITION OF SPIRITUALITY

A following topic that can be reported is how respondents define spirituality. According to all respondents, spirituality is important in vitalizing initiatives, but what they see as spirituality differs. Some respondents see spirituality as participation in liturgy and prayer, others place the emphasis more on the attribution of meaning. Respondents who speak about spirituality in diaconal work talk primarily about the motivation for diaconal work as an expression of faith. In addition, there are also cognitive views of spirituality, and views of spirituality that emphasize the experience of everyday life. The embedding of spirituality in renewal initiatives can thus receive different forms. In addition to the reported forms, other forms are also possible. Reflecting thoroughly on this can help initiatives bear fruit.

THE ROLE OF THE DIACONATE

Another question is the role the diaconate is given in initiatives. Some respondents believe that church communities themselves have to search for areas where society falls short, whereas others think that the church should rather link up with pluralist projects, and one respondent states that diaconal work is not important. The role of diaconal work in renewing church communities and how they can take up their role in society is also something that requires reflection in connection with renewing and vitalizing initiatives.

THE MISSIONARY CALLING

A final topic is how respondents see the missionary calling of the church. A number of respondents define this rather as a way of presence. By being recognizable as Christians in the public space, in various ways, they believe that the church can fulfill its missionary task. That can be externally recognizable, but expressing faith verbally is also mentioned. Here, it seems that avoiding speaking with an air of superiority is important for respondents. Another view is that points of contact must be sought that the church can take advantage of on the basis of its tradition. They find that, for example, in the attention paid to spirituality or in art and culture. Respondents also see opportunities for the church's missionary calling through a recognizable presence and being active in society in collaboration with non-Christians in, for example, diaconal work or as professionals in the church. The converse view, i.e., that the church has to be a prophetic counter-voice in society and show primarily the difference and weak points of society, however, is also present. That can be done first on an intellectual level, by showing the limits of, for example, autonomy thinking and individualism but also concretely by standing up for marginalized groups in diaconal work. Here, again, reflection is needed for what emphases are made or counterbalance sought in the fields of tension mentioned or rather moving forward in one direction.

