Coordination and communication

- Effects of coordination and communication internally and externally

- Methods to improve coordination and communication in the community

Just as you coordinate the individual parts and flow of your devotional, so too in a congregation the individual activities must be coordinated to make a meaningful whole. However, because many different people with different training, experience and values work together in a congregation, the coordination between the sub-activities is not as automatic and smooth as it was in the example of the devotion. As soon as several people are involved in an overall activity, those involved have to think specifically about and agree among themselves how the individual parts should fit together to form a whole. In order for this coordination process to take place, there needs to be an exchange of ideas among each other, i.e. communication.

2.1 Community climate

Have you ever planned something and then had to reorganize or even cancel it because something came up that you didn't know about? Then you know how annoying and frustrating these situations can be. It's all too easy for each person to start finding fault with the other and to think that everything would have worked out if the other person had informed them earlier. When such situations occur frequently, a bad climate of mistrust develops in the community. Typical statements from those affected are: "The church leadership is hardly interested in how things are going in the youth group" or on the other hand: "The youth group leaders almost never inform us; they do what they want anyway". Both are statements that indicate a poor community climate and a lack of coordination and communication skills. Sensible coordination and communication mechanisms therefore first have the effect within the community of preventing misunderstandings or, if something nevertheless goes wrong, of resolving the resulting conflict. Coordination and communication are therefore a prerequisite for a lasting good community climate.

2.2 Community identity (corporate identity)

Not only internally, but also externally, coordination and communication fulfil important tasks. If a congregation wants to appear credible to its own members and especially to the public, it should make sure that there is a certain uniformity in its expressions as a distinguishing feature. There is

widespread agreement among scholars that communication in all its forms can and should contribute to forming, conveying and consolidating the identity of the congregation. To put it simply, this happens when the self-image (corporate personality) can be harmonised with the external image (corporate image), i.e. when it is possible to communicate the goals, contents and activities of the municipality to all members on the one hand and to the public on the other. Or to put it simply: if what the majority of people imagine the church to be is consistent with what the church wants to be, then there is a formative identity. The methods to achieve this are communication and coordination within the congregation and to the outside world.

2.3 Employee identification

The identification of the employee with his or her task is an issue that is of very great importance in organizations with predominantly volunteer staff. Because there are no material incentives, it is all the more important that the organisation itself provides identification features, but this again presupposes an organisational identity (corporate identity). Of course, it can be argued that employee identification can also take place at the level of the management team and can be promoted with team-internal community-building measures. This kind of identification is undoubtedly valuable and can be very beneficial to a certain extent. However, the identity of the Jungschar should not become too strong in the sense of an integrative community work. Therefore, the identification of the worker with the congregation must be encouraged at all costs. Every leader of the youth group (and of course also the workers in all other sub-groups of the church) must be aware that his work is first and foremost church-building work.

After the rather theoretical, basic considerations in the last section, it is now time to get very practical. Here I want to show some methods how coordination and communication within the congregation can be concretely improved.

3.1 In the beginning the purpose

According to biblical understanding a church is not a leisure club but a purposeful social system that has to fulfill a divine mandate, namely to make people disciples of Jesus. This commission of Jesus, however, is formulated too generally to be directly translated into the daily work of the church. Each church must therefore carefully consider what this commission entails in relation to its cultural and social context, the gifts of the available staff, and the resources at its disposal. From these reflections, goals should emerge that define the emphases of the congregation's work. These goals should cover a time horizon of about 5 years. The following applies: the more short-term, the more concrete. A division into short (1 year), medium (2-3 years) and long-term (5 years) goals is particularly suitable. The leaders of each group within the congregation should be actively involved in developing or revising the goals each year, so that the goals are considered and supported by as many groups as possible.

3.2 Coordination already in planning

Based on the objectives of the whole community, the individual groups, e.g. the Jungschi team, can plan their activities. Here, too, a time horizon of two to three years should be taken into account for rough planning, and four to five years for major events. In concrete terms, this means that a Jungschi team should know at this point in time what types of camps will be offered in the next two to three years. This planning data from the individual groups is now collected centrally within the community and entered into a community calendar. Possible overlaps or an accumulation of events within a time period, which can lead to overloading of staff and unsatisfactory preparation of planned events, are thus identified at an early stage and can still be relatively easily avoided in the planning phase.

3.3 Coordination of communication

The essential task of communication in the community is to make community-related information known to the right recipient at the right time via the right medium. It follows that communication cannot simply be left to its own devices, but must be consistently planned.

Congregation-related information includes established objectives, planned events and activities of the various congregational groups, prayer requests from the various groups, etc. The media used to transport the information can be formal in nature, e.g., church newsletter, information wall, announcement at worship services, staff meetings, etc., or informal in nature, e.g., the "bush phone." The time at which information is disseminated should be set as early as possible in order to allow the recipients to think about it. Depending on the type of information, however, a delay may also be justified, namely if incomplete information could lead the recipient to the wrong conclusions. The circle of recipients depends on the type of information.

In principle, those responsible at each level are responsible for disseminating information from their community group. Specifically, this means, for example, that the JS leader is responsible for making sure that prayer requests for the next camp reach the prayer hour leader in a timely manner, or the church leadership is responsible for making sure that the JS leaders know what the focus of the church ministry should be. Or the JS leader for letting the main leader know what difficulties he is facing in his group.

3.4 Shaping formal communication

The design of formal communication is a task of the church leadership and the leadership of the various church groups. It involves creating formal communication channels for periodic or congregation-group or project-related information. A possible communication concept for a congregation can be found in the appendix. At the congregational level, formal communication, in my view, minimally

includes

- Regular meetings of the leaders of the individual congregational groups and the congregational leadership with the purpose of assessing the realization of the congregational goals and developing new goals and involving the staff in the responsibility for the congregation.
- Regular meetings of all church staff with the purpose of communicating the church's objectives and improving each staff member's vision for the other parts of the church
- Regular membership information meetings with the purpose of providing timely information to all church members about planned activities in all church groups
- Regular public information with the purpose of improving public awareness of the congregation and special invitations for specific activities.

At the JS leadership team (or other community group) level, formal communications minimally

include

- Regular preparation meetings for JS afternoons
- Regular planning meetings for future quarterly and camp programs
- Regularly contributing information for church communications to all staff and members

3.5 Informal communication creates the cement between employees

Informal communication is a tool that is unfortunately often misused by conveying mainly negative information (mostly about others). Used correctly, however, it can contribute significantly to improving the community climate. In non-coercive conversations with staff and congregation members, information can be obtained, praise, thanks and appreciation can be expressed, decisions can be justified, advice can be conveyed, or discreet criticism can be expressed. The result of targeted and positive informal communication is better human relations, deeper mutual trust, higher motivation and thus a better cooperation situation.

Communication and Coordination in the Community Worksheet

Proceeding: First, the church leadership and JS leadership team should answer the appropriate questions for themselves and make appropriate inquiries where necessary. Afterwards, it makes sense for the church leadership and JS leadership team, possibly also the leadership teams of the other church groups, to present the results to each other and discuss differing views.

Version "JS Leadership Team"

1. What are your goals for

?

- this year?

- the next 1 to 2 years?
- the next 3 to 5 years?

2. What goals has the community defined for

?

- this year
- the next 1 to 2 years?
- the next 3 to 5 years?

3. Are the goals of the youth group consistent with the goals of the congregation or are there contradictions?

4. How are the goals worked out in the congregation and in the Jungschar?

5. Through whom and how often are you informed about what is going on in the church and in the other groups besides the Jungschar?

Version "church leadership"

1. List the main goals of the church leadership and each church group, e.g., youth group, etc., for

- this year?
- the next 1 to 2 years?
- the next 3 to 5 years?

2. Are the goals of the overall church and the individual church groups aligned? Where are there contradictions?

3. How, how often, and by whom are the goals of the Gessamtgemeinde determined?

4. How are the objectives communicated to each community group?

5. How is it ensured in the community that the achievement of the objectives is also striven for in the individual community groups?

2 Coordination and communication

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