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## **THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGIOUS FAITH ON PROSOCIAL INTENTIONS AND BEHAVIORS. FINDINGS FROM A CROSS-SECTIONAL SURVEY AMONG YOUNG ADULTS VOLUNTARILY WORKING IN SOCIAL CONTEXTS**

### **WPŁYW WIARY NA PROSPOŁECZNE INTENCJE I ZACHOWANIA. WYNIKI BADANIA PRZEKROJOWEGO WŚRÓD MŁODYCH DOROSŁYCH PRACUJĄCYCH SPOŁECZNIE**

**Streszczenie:** Pomimo spadku zaufania religijnego w społeczeństwach zachodnich, młodzi dorośli nadal dobrowolnie pracują w kontekście społecznym. Niemniej jednak, „bycie z Bogiem” (jako religijna orientacja w życiu) miało znaczenie tylko dla około jednej trzeciej tych młodych dorosłych. Uzyskali oni wyższe wyniki w tym aspekcie wiary, gdy zostali wychowani w religijnej rodzinie i byli aktywnymi członkami wspólnoty kościelnej. Wskazuje to, że socjalizacja religijna ma znaczenie dla ich kształtowania wiary. W tej próbie młodych dorosłych wszyscy byli dobrowolnie zaangażowani w działalność społeczną, niezależnie od tego, czy byli aktywni w swojej wspólnotie kościelnej. Jeśli chodzi o współczucie jako intencję i ich zaangażowanie na rzecz osób znajdujących się w niekorzystnej sytuacji, „bycie z Bogiem” było mniej istotne w porównaniu ze zdolnością do wdzięczności. Nie oznacza to, że wiara religijna byłaby mniej istotna, ponieważ wewnętrzna religijność ma na celu ponowne połączenie się z Sacrum. Jest zatem celem samym w sobie, a nie narzędziem do uzyskania czegoś (Allport & Ross, 1967). Oba zasoby mogą być dalej rozwijane, ponieważ współczucie, podziw i wdzięczność są emocjami autotranscendentnymi, które są istotne dla społeczeństwa, które musi reagować na globalne kryzysy, szybkie zmiany kulturowe, a tym samym rosnący niepokój i niepewność.

**Słowa kluczowe:** wiara, duchowość, zachowania prospołeczne, młodzi dorośli, wolontariat

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**Abstract:** Despite the constant decline of religious trust in Western societies, young adults are still voluntarily working in a social context. Nevertheless, *Living from Faith / Being with God* (as a religious orientation in life) was of relevance for only about one-third of these young adults. They scored higher on this source of faith when they were raised in a religious family and were active members of a church community, indicating that religious socialization is relevant for their formation of faith and related ethics and ideals. However, in this sample of young adults, all were voluntarily engaged in the social field, whether they were active in their church, had a specific faith as an orientation in their life, and believed in God or not. Concerning compassion as an intention and their commitment to disadvantaged people, *Living from Faith / Being with God* was less relevant as compared to the ability to pause in wondering awe with subsequent feelings of gratitude. This does not mean that religious faith would be less relevant, as intrinsic religiosity aims to reconnect with the Sacred. It is thus an end in itself, rather than a tool to obtain something (Allport & Ross, 1967). Both resources could be further trained and developed, as compassion, awe, and gratitude are self-transcendent emotions that are relevant for a society that has to respond to global crises, rapid culture shifts, and thus growing anxiety and insecurity.

**Keywords:** faith, spirituality, prosocial behaviors, young adults, voluntary work.

## Background

In Germany, trust in church institutions and church membership is continually declining (FOWID 2022). In 2023, less than 50% of the population were members of the Catholic or Protestant church, and a large fraction are still considering leaving the church (EKD 2023). Specific reasons to leave the church were the sexual misconduct, waste of financial resources, rejection of homosexuals, the church's failure in terms of its demands and in dealing with social demands, and further increasing personal irrelevance of (Christian) religion and its churches (Ahrens 2022). This loss of reputation and relevance in people's lives cannot easily be reverted and thus one can expect that the following generations may lose their already weak connection to the Christian religion that shaped Western culture, ethics, and identity. However, for many, their faith, religiosity, or spirituality are a source of moral guidance, meaning, and comfort, particularly in difficult life situations (Thuné-Boyle et al., 2006; Wirth & Büssing 2016) that encourage social behaviors based on shared ethical values.

As religious socialization starts in childhood and is formed during youth also by religious organizations and peers (Landor et al. 2011), even when it is of course a life-long process (Bengtson et al., 2009), children and adolescents who are raised in a family that is rather distant from the church have low chances to make positive experiences with religious organization. Thus, they can easily lose interest in religious issues, particularly when their peers reject organized religiosity as invasive and outdated. In families with a more conservative religious (and political) orientation, religious transmission seems to be stronger among

their children as compared to families with more liberal views (Smith 2021). This religious transmission is fostered by church attendance as a form of congregational involvement, ascribed importance of faith in life, and conservative parenting approaches (Smith 2021).

The crucial point is that declining trust in the church as an organization may result in both, a decline of interest in the church and also in God. An argument against the latter suggestion could be that people who leave their church may nevertheless have a private (“invisible”) religiosity and may have an interest in more open forms of non-religious spirituality. However, the 2023 Church Membership Survey revealed that the frequency of religious practices is declining, too. As the most central aspect of religiosity is praying (as an indicator of a vital relationship with God), it is important to notice that 47% of the Church Membership Survey respondents are never praying, 34% sometimes per year or less often, while 8% pray at least once per week, and 11% daily (EKD 2023).

Not only religious practices are declining, but also the meaning of religiosity in peoples’ lives. Its strongest relevance seems to be as a resource to cope with difficult life situations (34%) and for the education of children (37%), while it has low relevance in terms of sexuality (9%), work and job (12%), and political attitudes (15%) (EKD 2023). Nevertheless, the church and its members are valued for their social engagement. In fact, on average 49% of Catholics and 46% of Protestants are involved in social engagement, as compared to 32% of non-religious people (EKD 2023). This engagement of concrete people, whether they are religious or not, is often managed by organizations that are part of the church’s structures.

It is a matter of discussion whether religiosity is causing cooperation and prosocial behavior or is evolving because of in-group mutual help (Oviedo 2016). At least it can be stated that religiosity and prosocial behavior are related to some extent (Van Cappellen et al., 2016), but religion is not necessarily needed for prosociality to appear (Oviedo 2016). When the motives of people who are voluntarily working for others in social organizations are analyzed, then the Values motive is in the foreground, while being religious or not is not that relevant to the engagement (Büssing et al., 2023). Also, the altruistic motivation of medical students during the COVID-19 pandemic to voluntarily help in hospitals was not significantly related to spiritual practices such as praying or meditation as indicators of the centrality of these issues in their lives (which scored low in the sample anyway) (Büssing et al., 2022). Nevertheless, the Values motive can be associated with specific indicators of spirituality, i.e., strongly with a mindful interaction with others, moderately with an existential search for insight and wisdom, and weakly with trust in God and religious practices (Büssing et al., 2023). In a further study, it was shown that the fundament of faith, namely having faith as an orientation in life and searching for God’s presence and closeness, is moderately related to a commitment to disadvantaged people and prosocial practices (Büssing et al., 2017). The respective *Living from Faith* scale scored lowest in younger participants as compared to older

people (assuming different socializations) and these faith scores were highest in religious brothers and sisters as compared to other participants. In religious brothers and sisters, who live by faith and trust in God as the fundament of their lives, *Living from Faith* was moderately related to a commitment to the creation (in terms of a pro-environmental attitude) and compassion as an ideal, and weakly to commitment to disadvantaged people (in terms of prosocial intentions) and altruistic behaviors (Büssing et al., 2018a). This centrality of faith as an orientation and inspiration, and the related longing for God's presence in life seems to be crucial, as it is also related to the ability to pause in wondering awe in different situations with subsequent feelings of gratitude (Büssing et al., 2018a). Awe, gratitude, and compassion are regarded as self-transcendent emotions that influence the social behavior of individuals and social groups (Stellar et al. 2017). Wondering awe indicates an ability to resonate with the world, and it is perceived less often by younger people and those with lower well-being as compared to older people and those with higher well-being, and by people who are praying or meditating (Büssing 2021).

For this analysis it was the aim to analyze 1) the relevance of the specific ideal of living from the faith in a sample of young adults who intended to voluntarily work in social contexts for one year, 2) the influence of being raised in a religious family and being an active member of a church community (assuming that these indicators of religious socialization are relevant), and 3) the associations between *Living from Faith* and compassion as an ideal and subsequent prosocial attitudes and behaviors.

## Materials and Methods

### Participants

The different institutions organized in the Voluntary Services of the Protestant Church of Germany (EKD) invited young adults who intended to work voluntarily for one year in a social context (mainly youth facilities, care facilities for people with physical or mental impairment, hospitals, nursing homes, etc.) to respond to an anonymous online survey (provided via LimeSurvey) with standardized measures. To guarantee anonymity, neither concrete identifying personal details nor IP addresses were recorded. The study was sponsored by the Protestant Church of Germany (EKD).

### Measures

The Franciscan-inspired Spirituality questionnaire (FraSpir) has two subscales that are relevant to the aims of the study, the 10-item *Living from Faith* scale (Cronbach's alpha = .85), and the 4-item *Commitment to Disadvantaged and*

*Creation* scale (Cronbach's alpha = .84) (Büssing et al. 2017, 2018a). Example items of the *Living from the Faith* scale are, "My faith is my orientation in life", "My faith/spirituality gives meaning to my life", and "I keep times of silence before God", while example items of the *Commitment* scale are, "I actively engage for the well-being of disadvantaged people", "I try to find ways to help people in need", "I am actively involved in the protection and maintenance of creation". All items were evaluated on a five-point agreement scale (0 – does not apply at all; 1 – does not truly apply; 2 – half and half (neither yes nor no); 3 – applies quite a bit; 4 – applies very much).

To address experiential aspects of religiosity and spirituality, both the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale and the Awe/Gratitude scale were used:

The Daily Spiritual Experience Scale in its 6-item version (DSES-6; Cronbach's alpha = .91) addresses the perception of the transcendent in daily life (Underwood and Teresi 2002; Underwood 2011). Topics are a sense of the presence of God, feeling God's love, the desire to be closer to God (union), finding strength/consolation in God, and being touched by the beauty of creation (Underwood and Teresi 2002). The answer categories range from many times a day (6), every day (5), most days (4), some days (3), once in a while (2), to never/almost never (1).

To measure the frequency of pausing in wondering awe and subsequent feelings of gratitude, the 7-item Awe/Gratitude scale (GrAw-7, Cronbach's alpha = .83) was used (Büssing et al. 2018b). Examples of items are "In certain places, I become very quiet and devout", "I stop and am captivated by the beauty of nature", "I pause and stay spellbound at the moment", "I stop and then think of so many things for which I'm really grateful". All items were evaluated on a four-point scale (0 – never; 1 – seldom; 2 – often; 3 – regularly).

From the SpREUK-P questionnaire (Büssing et al. 2012), two items were taken to measure the frequency of private praying (for others and self) and church attendance. The relative frequency of engagement was scored as never (0), seldom (1), often (2), or regularly (3).

Compassion as perception and attitude was measured using the Santa Clara Brief Compassion Scale (SCBCS; Cronbach's alpha = .90) (Hwang et al. 2008). Specific items are "When I hear about someone (a stranger) going through a difficult time, I feel a great deal of compassion for him or her", "I tend to feel compassion for people, even though I do not know them", and "I often have tender feelings toward people (strangers) when they seem to be in need". The SCBCS scores ranged from not at all true to me (1) to very true of me (7).

### Statistical Analyses

SPSS 28.0 was used to calculate descriptive statistics, internal consistency (Cronbach's coefficient alpha), factor analyses (principal component analysis using Varimax rotation with Kaiser's normalization) as well as group comparisons (Mann-Whitney-Test), first-order correlations (Spearman rho), and regression

analyses. Due to the exploratory nature of this study, the significance level was set at  $p < 0.01$ . Group comparisons are reported with effect sizes for better contextualization of results. Here,  $\eta^2$  values  $< 0.06$  are considered as small effects, between  $0.06$  and  $0.14$  as moderate effects, and  $> 0.14$  as strong effects. Regarding the classification of the strength of the observed correlations,  $r > 0.5$  was considered as a strong correlation, an  $r$  between  $0.3$  and  $0.5$  as a moderate correlation, an  $r$  between  $0.2$  and  $0.3$  as a weak correlation, and  $r < 0.2$  as negligible or no correlation.

## Results

### Description of the sample

The sample consisted of 3,582 participants who were enrolled by their respective organizations in 2021 and 2022. Their age (median and mean) was 19 years, and most were female (Table 1). 75% were nominally Christians, 6% had other religious affiliations, and 19% had none. Half of them grew up in a religious household, and 31% regard themselves as active members of a local church community. Concerning praying frequency, 36% were often or even regularly praying, and 38% were often or regularly attending church service (Table 1).

Perception of the Transcendent (DSES-6) scored in the lower mid-range, Awe/Gratitude in the mid-range, while Compassion and *Commitment to Disadvantaged and Creation* scored in the upper mid-range (Table 1).

**Table 1. Description of the sample (N=3,582)**

Variables	n	%	mean $\pm$ SD [range]
mean age (years)	3,524		18.8 $\pm$ 1.7 [16-30]
Gender	3,582	100	
female	2,351	65.6	
male	1,186	33.1	
non-binary/diverse	45	1.3	
Religion	3,569	100	
Christian	2,687	75.3	
other	199	5.6	
none	683	19.1	
Grown up in a religious household	3,546	100	
agreement	1,828	51.6	
disagreement	1,718	48.4	
Member of a local church community	3,582	100	
active member	1,091	30.5	
no	2,491	69.5	

Variables	n	%	mean $\pm$ SD [range]
Praying activity	3,569	100	1.2 $\pm$ 1.0 [0-3]
never	1,039	29.1	
seldom	1,247	34.9	
often	693	19.4	
regularly	590	16.5	
Church attendance	3,568	100	1.1 $\pm$ 1.0 [0-3]
never	1,245	34.9	
seldom	1,327	37.2	
often	433	12.1	
regularly	563	15.8	
Perception of the Transcendent (DSES-6)	3,549		15.8 $\pm$ 7.8 [6-36]
Awe/Gratitude (GrAw-7)	3,564		55.6 $\pm$ 20.6 [0-100]
Compassion (BSCCS)	3,581		5.1 $\pm$ 1.0 [1-7]
Commitment to Disadvantaged and Creation (FrSpir)	3,582		2.4 $\pm$ 0.8 [0-4]

#### Living from Faith in Young Adults

The primarily 10-item scale *Living from Faith* should first be revalidated in this sample of young adults (principal component analysis with Varimax rotation). However, with the elimination of item fio (“I always try to remain a seeker”) the internal consistency of the remaining nine items improved (Cronbach’s alpha = .97). These nine items represent a single factor explaining 81% of the variance (Table 2).

The scale’s main components are 1) the perception that faith is an orientation in life that also gives meaning to life, and that one tries to live according to the underlying religious beliefs, 2) that one is longing for closeness with God, keeps times of silence, listens to God’s words (i.e., in prayer times or times worship), and asks for advice in prayers, and 3) that one tries to find God’s presence in the world, and having a sense of the Sacred in one’s life (Table 2). This revalidated 9-item *Living from Faith / Being with God* scale (LFBG-9) will be used for further analyses.

**Table 2. Reliability and Factor analytic of the *Living from Faith / Being with God (LFBG-9)* scale**

	% agreement	Mean value [0-4]	Standard-deviation	Corrected item-scale correlation	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted (alpha = .972)	Factor loading
f4 My faith/spirituality gives meaning to my life	37.1	1.82	1.56	.910	.967	.930
f11 I am driven by a longing to be close to God	31.6	1.53	1.51	.904	.967	.923
f1 My faith is my orientation in life	38.7	1.88	1.52	.901	.967	.921
f7 I listen to God's word in me	30.8	1.54	1.43	.900	.967	.921
f5 I try to trace the divine in the world	32.0	1.65	1.43	.871	.968	.898
f9 Before important decisions I seek advice in prayer	34.1	1.60	1.55	.862	.969	.890
f2 I try to live in accordance with my religious beliefs	39.6	1.90	1.48	.855	.969	.884
f8 I keep times of silence before God	28.5	1.51	1.44	.855	.969	.884
f6 I have a sense of the Sacred in my life	29.5	1.61	1.35	.825	.970	.859
f10 I always try to remain a seeker	30.6	1.75	1.31	-	-	-

Extraction method: Principal component analysis (Varimax rotation). Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin value = .96; Bartlett test < 0.001.

#### Living from Faith / Being with God in specific subgroups

The majority of young adults in this sample scored low on this rather explicit religious-spiritual scale. Agreement to the nine items ranges between 28.5% and 39.6% (Table 2). The respective mean score of the scale is  $1.7 \pm 1.3$  (with a range of 0 to 4); the 25% percentile is at 0.3 (17% of the participants scored 0), and the 75% percentile is at 2.9.

There were no significant gender-related differences ( $1.7 \pm 1.3$  vs.  $1.6 \pm 1.2$ ;  $p=0.173$ ,  $\text{Eta}^2<.001$ ), while those who are active members in a local church community scored higher than those who were not ( $2.9 \pm 1.0$  vs.  $1.2 \pm 1.1$ ;  $p<0.001$ ,  $\text{Eta}^2=.347$ ). Similarly, participants who were raised in a religious family scored higher than those who were



not ( $2.3 \pm 1.2$  vs.  $1.0 \pm 1.1$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ;  $\text{Eta}^2 = .272$ ). Both effects are strong. Those without a religious affiliation ( $0.4 \pm 0.7$ ) scored lower than participants with a Christian denomination ( $2.0 \pm 1.3$ ) or participants with other religious denominations ( $2.2 \pm 1.2$ ); these differences are significant and strong, too ( $p < 0.001$ ,  $\text{Eta}^2 = .217$ ).

Correlations between Living from Faith / Being with God and other religious and prosocial attitudes and behaviors

The explicitly religious *Living from Faith / Being with God* scale is strongly related to the frequency of praying and church attendance, to the perception of the transcendent in life, moderately to feelings of Awe/Gratitude, and weakly to compassion and *Commitment to Disadvantaged and the Creation* (Table 3). A similar correlation pattern is found for the Perception of the Transcendent. In contrast, the indicator of a non-religious aspect of spirituality, Awe/Gratitude (which is nevertheless strongly related to perceiving the transcendent in life and moderately to praying and church attendance), is moderately related to both compassion and *Commitment to Disadvantaged and the Creation* (Table 3).

**Table 3 Correlation analyses**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Living from Faith / Being with God (LFBG-9)	1						
2 Praying (SpREUK-P)	,828**	1					
3 Church attendance (SpREUK-P)	,714**	,701**	1				
4 Perception of the Transcendent (DSES-6)	,869**	,789**	,674**	1			
5 Awe/Gratitude (GrAw-7)	,485**	,410**	,347**	,565**	1		
6 Compassion (BSCCS)	,214**	,167**	,127**	,219**	,343**	1	
7 Commitment to Disadvantaged people and the Creation (FrSpir)	,286**	,226**	,208**	,300**	,356**	,399**	1

\*\* $p < 0.001$  (Spearman rho), moderate and strong correlations are highlighted

#### Predictors of Living from Faith / Being with God

To clarify which influences were the best predictors of *Living from Faith / Being with God* as the dependent variable, regression analyses in different steps were performed. First, the influence of being raised in a religious household and being an active member of a local church community was assessed. As shown in Table 4, both variables are important predictors that would explain 45% of the variance of the LFBG-9 scale. With the introduction of religious practices such as praying and church attendance, the relevance of the aforementioned social influences declined

but is still of relevance. In that resulting regression model, praying was the best predictor, and these four variables together would explain 74% of the variance (Table 4). In the third step, the experiential aspects of spirituality, Perception of the Transcendent, and Awe/Gratitude, were introduced. As a consequence, Perception of the Transcendent and praying became the best predictors, while the other influences were weak only, and Awe/Gratitude had no independent and significant effect (Table 4). This third model explains 83% of the variance. This means the relevant influence of being raised in a religious household and being active in the church community is overlaid by the religious practices and the experiences of the transcendent in life.

**Table 4. Predictors of Living from Faith / Being with God (LFBG-9) (3-step regression analyses**

Dependent variable: LFBG-9	Beta	T	p
1	Model 1: F=1440.1, p<0.001; R <sup>2</sup> =.449		
	(Constant)	32.645	<.001
	Grown up in a religious household	.345	25.506
	Active member of a local church community	.456	33.666
2	Model 2: F=2446.5, p<0.001; R <sup>2</sup> =.735		
	(Constant)	12.963	<.001
	Grown up in a religious household	.109	10.644
	Active member of a local church community	.087	7.160
	Praying	.591	47.440
	Church attendance	.193	13.306
3	Model 3: F=2814.6, p<0.001; R <sup>2</sup> =.828		
	(Constant)	-16.861	<.001
	Grown up in a religious household	.064	7.733
	Active member of a local church community	.045	4.498
	Praying	.290	23.654
	Church attendance	.110	9.192
	Perception of the Transcendent (DSES-6)	.512	39.190
	Awe/Gratitude (GrAw-7)	.007	.784

## Discussion

Of the young adults examined here, who have chosen to voluntarily work for others within the context of the Voluntary Services in the Protestant Church, most had a nominal religious affiliation (81%). However, only about one-third stated that they were actively involved in their church community, were praying often or regularly, and were going to church. Similarly, *Living from Faith / Being with God* was relevant for about one-third. There is an obvious discrepancy between nominal

religiousness and the centrality of religiosity in life. Nevertheless, having this orientation in life was significantly higher in participants grown up in a religious family and who are active members of a church community. This would indicate that the religious socialization in the family and the church community influences young adults' current religious trust and related religious practices. These findings fit in principle with those of Smith who found that religious transmission was more effective in families with rather conservative religious views as compared to other families (Smith 2020). However, while the family lies the foundation of faith development, during adolescence and emerging adulthood young people are confronted with secularizing influences they have to deal with (Smith & Snell, 2009), As a consequence, their faith could be shaken and may be lost.

In our study, the best predictors of having faith as an orientation in life and seeking closeness to God were perception of the transcendent in daily life concerns and praying activity. As religiosity is assumed to be related to specific ethics and prosocial behavior (Oviedo 2016; Van Cappellen et al., 2016), one would suggest that *Living from Faith / Being with God* and praying as the core components of religiosity are associated with compassion and intentional commitment to disadvantaged people and the creation as an underlying motive. However, this correlative association was weak only for *Living from Faith / Being with God*, marginal to weak for praying and church attendance, and weak to moderate for the (religious) perception of the transcendent. Consistently, in another study religiosity and church attendance were marginally only related to spontaneous sharing intentions of hypothetical gains, and this association was mediated by social bonding with others in the community and by positive emotions on Sundays (Van Cappellen et al. 2016). In contrast, awe and gratitude as a perceptive aspect of non-religious spirituality were moderately related to prosocial behavior. It might be that the experience of sacred moments in life that result in awe perceptions with subsequent feelings of gratitude (Büssing 2021) initiate reflection processes to behave differently, being more compassionate and caring. Having faith alone as a foremost cognitive concept might not be enough, as the experiential aspects of spirituality seem to be more relevant. Also for this ability to pause in wondering awe and being grateful, a small but significant difference was found between young adults raised in a religious family as compared to those who were not ( $60.1 \pm 19.1$  vs  $50.6 \pm 20.8$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ,  $\text{Eta}^2 = .054$ ), while the difference between participants being active in a church community or not was moderate ( $64.2 \pm 17.9$  vs  $51.8 \pm 20.5$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ,  $\text{Eta}^2 = .078$ ). The Awe/Gratitude scores of these young adults are in the same range as other young people but are lower than those of older people (Büssing 2020).

For both, *Living from Faith / Being with God* (as a religious orientation in life) and awe and gratitude (as an experiential aspect of the Sacred that can be found in everything around (Büssing & Dienberg 2024)), the basic sensitivity or awareness is probably established early in education and further developed in the different life contexts. To support this, 1) there has to be continuing education (information)

to raise awareness that these resources are still available (attention). This process of awareness training facilitates the experience of the Sacred in life. Religious education promotes common values, a sense of community, prosocial behavior, and individual meaning finding, and thus helps to stabilize a social society. Therefore, 2) opportunities and concrete places are needed (organizations) where these ideals and behaviors can be tested and where the viability of religious convictions can prove itself. The church-related organizations provide the opportunity that people with diverse intentions, ideals, and religious or non-religious convictions can make new experiences that further shape their ideals to behave differently in a complex world.

However, many people are now turning away from their church in disappointment (Ahrens 2022; EKD 2023). Regaining this lost trust can only be achieved when those who lead a compassionate and authentic life become the inspiration that faith is more than an exclusive organization that even has to discuss who can be blessed or not. – Perhaps those few (the one-third in this sample) who have trust in God and live by their faith are exactly this inspiring group, and maybe the others who were nevertheless voluntarily working in the social context but lack this faith and orientation will later look back on this period of life and find it valuable and enriching.

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