

Synodality in Estonia

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About this document

(1) This document is what an inter-confessional group decided to say to the Synod on Synodality (hereafter *Synod*).

(2) The authors and contributors love the Church as she is, despite all justified criticism¹, and want to help her on her synodal journey of seeking what is good and true. We tried to listen to *all* those who care for the Church, „including those who have abandoned the practice of the faith, people from other faith traditions, people who have no religious beliefs at all.“²

(3) This work was published on **March 31, 2022** and is licensed under [CC BY-SA 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/). It was written by **Luc Saffre, Stiiv Knowers, Ingmar Kurg** and **Annely Neame** as responsible authors. Besides countless private conversations we had four physical meetings called “sinoditalgud”³, where we prayed and discussed the details of this document. Many individuals contributed by their prayer and feedback. Some of them agreed to be named: Matthias Burghardt, Jürgen Hein, Toomas Jürgenstein, Kadri Kesküla, Kaimo Klement, Aleksander Koppel, Ivo Kruusamägi, Jaan Lahe, Samuel Maikalu, William Straus.

Introduction

(4) The world seems quite stormy these times: war, pandemic, ransomware, climate crisis, pollution, fake news, terrorism. Humanity is facing unprecedented challenges: we need to discuss about questions that had never required world-wide consensus before. Video conferences boomed during the pandemic and considerably increased contact between cultures. And we can expect even more revolutionary changes in our social infrastructures.

(5) Also the Church seems stormy these times. How is the biggest religious institution in the world going to address these issues? Can Christians and non-religious people learn from each other?

A learning process, not a battle

(6) The Synod is often seen as a “battle” between “camps” who “fight” for “their” respective “image” of the Church. Already the fundamental question of the consultation triggered strong emotions. Some participants said “The Church is *rooted* in Jesus Christ, it does not *journey*”.

1 General Audience 2022-02-16, <https://www.vaticannews.va/de/papst/news/2022-02/papst-franziskus-generalaudienz-kritik-josef-kirche.html>

2 [Vademecum](#), 2.1

3 A “talgu” (usually its plural form “[talgud](#)”) is a meeting where some community work is done by volunteers.

Others said “We *know* what is good and true, we are not *seeking* for it.” One responder⁴ said “I view the Synod as negative influence on the Catholic faith. In fact, it can even be considered as sabotage of the Catholic faith.”

(7) “Who is to blame when there is a battle?” Answer: “the wiser one”⁵. We cannot solve problems by refusing to speak about them. The visible church institutions *do* have serious issues, some of which *deserve* criticism and *require* steps to be taken.

(8) Opposing positions among Christians sometimes exclude each other dramatically and there is no way to embrace them both. “No one can serve two masters” (Matthew 6:24, Luke 16:13). They are not specific to the Catholic church. Issues related to synodality can be observed in every denomination. “They will be divided, father against son and son against father (...)” (Luke 12:53).

(9) A “battle” indicates that we are about to learn something important. “I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled!” (Luke 12,49). The Synod acts as a signal that triggers an inter-confessional avalanche of events. The extent of this avalanche is not yet foreseeable.

(10) The first step in every dialogue is to agree on what we are talking about.

The teachings of the Church

(11) In this document we use the word “teaching” in its most general meaning : a **teaching** is any [document](#) in human language⁶ that teaches something.

(12) We need *teachings* in order to announce the Gospel anew in every culture and generation.

(13) The teachings of the Church have different levels of maturity and hence authority:

- The **Scriptures** are historic documents that the Church considers worthy of being *preserved* and *venerated*. These include the **Bible** (venerated by all Christians), and the teachings of the [Church Fathers](#) (venerated by many Christians, but not all)⁷.
- The **official teachings** emitted by church institutions are published and *maintained* by the authoring community. They are binding for the members of that institution. They receive occasional updates, but evolve slowly. They can be in contradiction with those of other institutions.
- The **never-ending stream of independent** teachings of varying authority published by miscellaneous communities and individual humans.

(14) The teachings of the Church are the biggest and most complex documentation library in the world, developed over more than 3000 years, with the biggest community of contributors, with document types ranging from letters, blog entries, news, homilies, prayers, songs, books, films, to dogmatic constitutions, research reports and law collections, with an audience ranging from 2 year old children to experts of every branch of science. Preserving and maintaining this documentation library is a huge and never-ending responsibility of the Church.

Human hearts

(15) When we see a way of thinking or acting that is not “as we were taught”, then we feel irritated and are tempted to say “this is wrong”⁸. In such situations it is important to enter into dialogue.

(16) Human dialogue is always inspired by **emotions**. Emotions can be pleasant or unpleasant, but they are neither good nor bad as such. They arise when an incoming signal meets our personal **convictions**. Convictions are stored in our **hearts**⁹. Emotions are the primary reac-

4 Private email 2022-03-03

5 We heard this quote (attributed to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe) from a contributor who is not baptized.

6 See National Center for Biotechnology Information <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5525259/>

7 Real-life illustration in https://hw.saffre-rumma.net/blog/2022/0228_2000/

8 Some participants expressed their strong conviction that the Eucharist needs both forms of bread and wine.

9 The word „heart“ has a different definition when surgeons speak about their work than when lovers speak about their emotions.

tion of our heart to an incoming signal. Human hearts grow slowly like a tree¹⁰. Every conviction deserves respect. **Emotional intelligence** is the art of reading and interpreting our own emotions and those of others with respect and prudence in order to understand what God is telling us.

(17) A successful dialogue requires all participants to be aware that diving into other people's convictions does not require giving up your own convictions. Overcoming an unpleasant emotion does not mean that you stop feeling it. God "will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it." ([1 Corinthians 10:13](#))

Section 1 : A synodal Church

A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, 'journeys together'.

A neologism

(18) While the word "synod" has been widely used since ancient times to designate an ecclesiastical council, the adjective "synodal" (together with its derived noun "synodality") is a [neologism](#). It has the same parents as „synod“ (both words come from Greek *συν* together and *ὁδός* way, journey), but saying „The Church is synodal“ does obviously not mean that the Church functions only in synods. This neologism emerged during the pontificate of Pope Francis. He spoke about it during a speech in 2015¹¹. It was later¹² described as "the decision to journey together" that was „at the heart of the work of renewal the Council Vatican II was encouraging“, as the specific organization model („*modus vivendi et operandi*“) of the Church.

(19) Synodality carries in itself unity in diversity.

(20) We suggest the following definition: **Synodality** is journeying together as a community. Where **journeying** means being on our way, we are not yet there. We cannot exclude anybody because we all are children of God.

Who are we?

(21) A **Christian** is anybody who professes belief in the Gospel and is confirmed as doing so by being baptized¹³. The **Gospel** is the divine message brought to humanity through Jesus Christ.

(22) Who is part of the Church? God's final decision may surprise both the righteous and those excluded ([Matthew 25:31-46](#)). You recognize a prophet from his fruits ([Matthew 7:16](#)). The (visible) fruit of our (invisible) faith is our *behaviour*. The fruits of a teaching are the *convictions* it cultivates in our hearts and the *behaviour* motivated by these convictions.

(23) There are people who don't call themselves "Christian", but who work for the Kingdom of God. We can consider them as indirectly inspired because "the one who is not against us is for us" ([Mark 9:38-40](#)).

(24) The temptation of anybody who follows some religion is to believe themselves superior to the one who just follows their "uncultivated" convictions. Compare the prayers of the Pharisee and the tax collector in [Luke 18:9-14](#).

(25) If „love your neighbour and even your enemy“ applies to communities as well as to individual humans, we must learn to learn from each other.¹⁴

¹⁰ Annosa arbor non transplantatur – [Walter of Châtillon](#) (12th century)

¹¹ Pope Francis, Address at the Ceremony Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops (17 October 2015). https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/october/documents/papa-francesco_20151017_50-anniversario-sinodo.html

¹² Synodality in the life and mission of the Church (2 March 2018).

https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20180302_sinodalita_en.html

¹³ There is no juridical definition of "Christian", "Gospel" and "baptized". Most Christian denominations provide their own definitions. "There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12).

¹⁴ Are there scientific studies that compare different denominations regarding the number of testimonies of salvation through the Gospel? And how would such studies define what means „salvation“?

(26) A synodal Church acknowledges that intolerable behaviour is judged as such by God, and that we must react to it with love, which is patient and kind, bears, believes and hopes all things, and is not arrogant, rude, irritable or resentful. ([1 Corinthians 13](#))

Section 2 : The Church in Estonia

How is this ‘journeying together’ happening today in your local Church?

Freedom of religion

(27) The Christians in Estonia do quite well because Estonians are open-minded and don't get angry when their neighbour has a different *modus vivendi*. Freedom of religion is guaranteed by constitution. People in Estonia are allowed to celebrate and worship whatever they want. *As long as they remain in their private domain.*

(28) Christian denominations in Estonia collaborate in the *Estonian Council of Churches*¹⁵, the *Estonian Evangelical Alliance*¹⁶ and others. The general climate between Christians is cooperative. “We are continuously looking for ways to better understand, trust and mutually assist each other to proclaim a common Gospel message to all of Estonia.”¹⁷

A Church in the underground

(29) Estonians love to say that they are **the least religious people** in the world. This slogan is both true and false depending on your definition of the word „religious“. They refuse institutional teachings about the invisible world, which opens them to all kind of loosely defined ideologies. They are culturally averse to any ideological indoctrination.

(30) Most Estonian institutions are ignorant of the Church as a potential partner in dialogue.

(31) Christians are sometimes considered in the same category as other disadvantaged communities along with bullied children, immigrants, ethnic minorities and handicapped people.¹⁸

(32) Most Estonians **don't differentiate** between the denominations. „Church“ means „everybody who happens to speak about Jesus“.

(33) Most **schools**¹⁹ in Estonia teach a picture of the Church that is obsolete by at least 500 years²⁰. Announcements made by political parties, private companies or religious communities are not allowed in schools.

(34) **Sexual education** in Estonia aligns with the directives of the European Union. Estonian law permits abortion during the first six weeks of pregnancy. Most Estonians consider this a wise solution, which minimizes harm and suffering. Most Estonians agree that **LGBT people** should not hide their particular sexual orientation or identity. There are of course controversial opinions regarding their rights in society.

(35) Many Estonians know that Christians follow the [ten commandments](#), but have never heard about the [beatitudes](#). While the Old Testament is commonly known even by people who refuse to follow it, the New Testament is much less visible in public life.

(36) Many Estonians imagine the Church as what Daniel Vaarik²¹ labelled a “**truth institution**”: “Truth institutions were obscenely convinced that they are always right. They never acknowledged any mistake, because this would have meant that they are no longer a *truth* institution. They were slow and introvert. For they feared to make mistakes or to admit them. That's also why they spoke using the complicated Truth Language. But despite their convulsive efforts, people often misunderstood them.”

15 http://ekn.ee/sisu.php?lehe_id=5

16 <http://www.allianss.ee/2021/12/15/eea-pohikiri-2021/>

17 <http://www.allianss.ee/dokumendid-2/koik-kirikud-kuulutavad-uhist-evangeeliumi-kogu-eestimaal/>

18 See <https://belglane.saffre-rumma.net/blog/2020/0131/>

19 Except for the few explicitly Christian schools: <http://www.kristlik.edu.ee/kool/>

20 See https://hw.saffre-rumma.net/blog/2022/0220_2000/

21 Daniel Vaarik, Asutaja piinad. Tõe asemel koostöö. <https://www.levila.ee/tekstid/asutaja-piinad/asutaja-piinad-toe-ase-mel-koostoo>

(37) Some theologians in Estonia try to get rid of this image. Toomas Jürgestein explains that “every teacher is always also a learner: these two go together” and that “teaching always includes learning.”²² But we are still often tempted to “escape into a pure teaching” and forget that “faith must prove itself and grow in contact with reality.”²³

(38) Christians in Estonia learn about their church mainly through the media and discussions in social media. A small “elite” participate in catechesis or seminars. Many Christians have some independent publisher as their preferred source of information. Very few Christians in Estonia read Vatican News.

(39) Many Christians in Estonia resemble more the Pharisees than the apostles in their fervent fight for traditional moral values.

A people longing for God

(40) Many people in Estonia have a deep respect and interest for traditions and moral values. They understand the beauty of ancient rites. They love both the visible and the invisible aspects of reality, they skilfully use poetic language, music, images or sculptures for describing it. They seek for what is good and true. They understand the need of a common code of conduct for living in sustainable peace. They long for true ethical values beyond those defined by plain law. Estonians long for God.

(41) And they refuse to listen to the Church. This is a tougher verdict than being repressed by some authoritarian regime. But we don't worry about the Church. Our worry is: can a nation thrive without Jesus?

(42) This situation has complex causes. Estonia's history is certainly one of them. During the soviet era, the Church in Estonia was institutionally marginalized and all support from the government was strictly out of the question. But the Church survived. The faithful ones gave from the little they had and somehow the churches were kept open. Scientific atheism was methodically imposed in schools, universities and workplaces. Atheism was the norm, the healthy world view, erring from it was considered a danger to society or simply a handicap. Whole generations were raised in the spirit of atheism. Instead of confirmation young Estonians went to “võsaleer”, which translates into “bush-confirmation” or a “mock-confirmation”. Young people came together for a time of fun games and drinking. Churches and believers were openly mocked, religious education was systematically not given i.e. it was forbidden. The country of Estonia regained freedom and independence in 1991. People flocked together and begged God for freedom and peace in their land. Euphoria from this newly found freedom lead tens and even hundreds of thousands of people to churches - because now they could go, and no one stopped them. People came to church and expressed their freedom of choice and it was great. The Church did not do much to evangelize these people. A lot of pagans were baptized quickly, but the Church did not teach them well and did not follow up on their spiritual growth. The clergy were proud about their status in the society, they were called to speak and preside and bless everywhere. Even government deemed them important. People flocked to the Church without anybody doing much to invite them. It was a time of grace. Today 34 years later the churches are emptying again. The membership is in steady decline. The Church does not reach the vast majority of our cities and villages. With some exceptional exceptions, the Church does the absolute minimum when it comes to proactively reaching out to people. The majority of Estonian people have no religious education, no Christian family traditions, no tradition of prayer, no tradition of talking about faith in the family, the tradition of giving to the church has been mostly lost. It is a deep sociological problem.²⁴

22 Kirjutamisest ja õpetamisest. Intervjuu [Toomas Jürgesteiniga](https://kjt.ee/2022/01/kirjutamisest-ja-opetamisest-intervjuu-toomas-jurgensteiniga). <https://kjt.ee/2022/01/kirjutamisest-ja-opetamisest-intervjuu-toomas-jurgensteiniga>

23 Papst em. Benedikt: „Lehre muss sich in und aus Glauben entwickeln“, <https://www.vaticannews.va/de/vatikan/news/2021-07/emeritiert-papst-benedikt-lehre-entwickelt-glaube-entweltlichung.html>

24 Annely Neame, EELK document

(43) Let us look at our own sin ([Matthew 7:3-5](#)): who is responsible when the pupil fails to hear what the teacher says – the teacher or the pupil? Something fundamental needs to change within the Church!

Mother wearing her coat inside-out

(44) How dare we say that our beloved mother Church needs to change something fundamental? The following image encouraged us to dive into this: When you are a child and go shopping with your mother, and when you see that your mother has put her coat inside-out, will you let her get exposed to laughter of other people? No! Of course you will help her to turn her coat right.²⁵

(45) Estonians are reasonable and realistic people. When you tell them something that is in contradiction with what they know to be true, they simply turn away and stop listening to you. Each time the Church is seen “wearing her coat inside-out”, people of good will turn away from the Church – and from Jesus. Representatives of [New Atheism](#) don’t criticize the *ideal* Church, they criticize some part of the Church that they saw wearing her coat inside-out.

(46) The Church happens to say things that are in contradiction with common sense. For example, it is difficult to explain:

- why God asks us to trust in a book rather than trusting our hearts
- why God forgives your sins but requires you to lead a “morally upright” life
- that all humans are sinners by birth and need to get baptized in order to get saved
- how loving your enemies would lead to peace
- how a guy who lived 2000 years ago would be important to their life

(47) Some important reasons for people in Estonia to refuse the church are

- teachings that contradict common sense
- her claim to own the one and only truth
- historic mistakes of the church (crusades, inquisition, ...)
- preference of a magical faith over forgiveness of sins
- non-transparent governance
- mistrust of all institutions

(48) The Church is sometimes reluctant to say that the Gospel itself remains an axiom, a mystery of faith, which we cannot and do not want to prove. The Church has seen herself as the guardian of the Gospel who is responsible for protecting it. The Gospel needs no guardian.

(49) The message of [Dei Verbum](#), which explains that Jesus sheds a new light on the role of Scripture for our faith and that the Gospel is more than the Bible, is not well known in Estonia.

(50) Many Estonians, both followers and opponents of the Church, see the Bible as a “magic” book that gives “clear” instructions for “getting into Heaven”. The Gospel has nothing **magical**. Christian faith is about right relationship to **reality**, not an idolatry of something “supernatural”.

(51) The Church in Estonia has a rather clerical image. Christians say “Speaking about faith should be done by priests and professional teachers” or “I am not wiser than books”.

(52) Non-Christians imagine Church as a place where you may not laugh, must be quiet and behave in a grave and earnest manner. They expect Christians to follow moral standards they themselves have no inclination to follow.

(53) Getting baptized is often seen as an “administrative step” in order to receive the services of the church. Many Christians in Estonia don’t know about [spiritual growth](#).²⁶

25 Marie-Noëlle Thabut, une vie avec la Bible. <https://www.la-croix.com/Religion/Catholicisme/France/Marie-Noelle-Thabut-vie-Bible-2018-12-23-1200991349>

26 “Luteri kirik on mõnus, sest nad jätavad sind rahule.”

(54) The Church in Estonia is seen as a major preserver of ancient buildings and cultural heritage.

Paradoxical language

(55) Wise men think about the Gospel for their whole lives and yet can't formulate it better than using paradoxical language. And at the same time the Gospel can be clear and unbiased when you hear it, regardless of your educational degrees. God has "hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children" ([Matthew 11:25](#))

(56) All statements in the following table are seemingly opposing, and yet each of them is valid. This is why Scriptures don't express "clear positions" and need to be explained anew in every culture and generation.

God is just and punishes a sinful life.	God is merciful and forgives our mistakes.
We are well-organized and obedient.	We are creative and co-responsible. "We must obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29)
We speak carefully and with reverence.	We speak openly and without fear.
We make no compromises.	We embrace differences and are inclusive.
We are strong because we hope in God.	We put our trust in God despite our weakness.
Our teachings are solid and the truth.	Our teachings are inspiring and open-minded.
The Bible is self-explaining, our job is to <i>proclaim</i> it.	The Bible needs explanation, our job is to <i>explain</i> it.
God protects us from evil.	God protects the poor and weak from the rich and strong.
No salvation outside of the Church. Only the baptized can be saved.	No salvation without the Gospel. There are people who follow the <i>Gospel</i> without being baptized (Matthew 7:21)
The Gospel calls us to follow the Church.	The Gospel calls us to love our neighbour.
Speak out against immorality. ²⁷ Tell your brother when he is wrong (Mt 18:17).	Do not to look for evil in others, but good. ²⁸
Don't speak loud in public. Live hidden to live happily ²⁹ . "He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street" (Isaiah 42:2)	Say your opinion in public. „You are the light of the world“ (Matthew 5:14). "What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops." (Matthew 10:27)

What is a synodal Church?

(57) A synodal Church knows where it has come from and treasures the Hebrew scriptures and the New Testament as a library created by individuals and faithful communities. The revelation given to Moses and the prophets is to be taken as it has been passed on to us.

(58) A synodal Church also cherishes all the teachings that have been evolved since then to unite those unavoidable differences of emphasis and the paradoxes that occur when human beings try to express their faith in God in words that are designed to be provable by science, logic and the best of human intelligence.

(59) A synodal Church knows where it is going to and prays that the kingdom of God will come, and God's will may be done. Just as Christian people may differ in the way that they remember where they are coming from, so too they may differ in how they envision the living

27 <https://www.thebiblejourney.org/the-bible-journey/18-letters-from-james-jude-peter35508/peter-speaks-out-against-immorality/>

28 Angelus 2022-02-07. <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2022-02/pope-at-angelus-strive-to-see-clearly-and-speak-charitably.html>

29 „vivons cachés pour vivre heureux“ is the final verse of a fable by French author Florian around 1750. https://fr.wiktionary.org/wiki/pour_vivre_heureux_vivons_cach%C3%A9s

out of the commandment of Jesus to love their neighbour and even their enemy as themselves. However they know that if God's reign on earth is to align with God's reign in heaven, they must look towards God, and fix their prayerful attention on his love, so that the divine love will cast out their fear and unforgiveness and patiently sanctify them.

(60) A synodal Church knows that when it is feeling defeated, disempowered and under threat, it will find transforming power in the victorious death of Jesus Christ, who is the human face of God, and also in the prophecy of Isaiah that anticipated and explains his self-sacrifice.

(61) A synodal Church knows that everything is a gift from God, and so, when it is inward-looking and backward-looking and talking only to itself, it will not behave as if it knows all the answers for all time. The synodal Church will be joined on its journey, by a stranger, whom, at first, it will not recognise. Jesus himself had taught that whoever feeds the hungry, refreshes the thirsty, visits the sick or the prisoner, will have met Jesus himself as he gives the gift of his risen presence to them. It is not that the stranger we meet on the journey just might turn out to be Jesus risen: he always is. In such a way, does the ordinary follower of Jesus meet him risen and glorified.

(62) A synodal Church will discover that forgiveness is not just a grace that Jesus asks us to give to one another, but also his gift of grace to us, as he walks beside us, even when we are walking in the wrong direction. Far from valuing the infallibility of the Church, he comes along beside us and loves us in our fallibility and refuses to be defeated by our mistakes. He shows the power of his risen life by coming especially to those who had betrayed and deserted him, and pardoning them, and he continues to do so.

(63) A synodal Church is a Church that is on the move and is accompanied by the risen Christ made known in a beloved stranger (Luke 24:13-35). A synodal Church will discover Jesus speaking through each stranger, warming their hearts, needing their attention, their care and their hospitality and such a Church will invite such a beloved stranger into their homes and lives, and call on him for prayer and blessing, as if he himself is the host.

(64) A synodal Church will then find that, at the very moment when he breaks bread, and opens eyes, the risen Jesus is no longer seen, but his disappearing causes no troubling of the Church's heart. It is as if Jesus is calling the Church to behave as Dietrich Bonhoeffer put it, as a Church that has 'come of age'. As long as the Church recognises Jesus risen in the stranger, Jesus will be present in the Church.

(65) A synodal Church wishes that every human should believe in the gospel by its own free volition and refuses any form of power or violence to enforce this wish.

(66) In conclusion, a synodal Church is one that walks in the faithful expectation that the risen Christ will honour his promise to walk alongside, listen, break open the scriptures and break bread; namely the stranger who becomes the sacred host. To use the illustration of the mother who puts on her coat inside-out, a synodal Church will show her faithfulness by displaying her vulnerability to the outsider, if she dares to.

Section 3 : Suggestions

What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our 'journeying together?'

Step 1 : Learn to use plain language

(67) The Church should learn to use [plain language](https://www.plainlanguage.gov/about/definitions/) when explaining the Scriptures, so that her "audience can find what they need, understand what they find the first time they read or hear it, and use what they find to meet their needs."³⁰

(68) The Church should develop and publish a universal and consistent documentation library that explains in plain language what the Gospel says to every human in the visible world of our time.

³⁰ <https://www.plainlanguage.gov/about/definitions/>

(69) These “fundamental teachings” would serve as orientation to the church institutions. The church institutions would not have to abandon their own teachings or “replace them” by “ecumenical” or “diluted” teachings. Their own teachings may remain more specific than the fundamental teachings. The fundamental teachings won’t replace or update any historic teaching, they *comment* on them and explain how to understand them.

(70) Independent teachings of the different church communities are texts formulated in human language at a given time. They are developed by the community that publishes them. Every author of a teaching is responsible for maintaining their publication. Publishing teachings and then ceasing to maintain them can promote disorder. Even the different translations of the Bible evolve. “Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin.” ([Luke 17:2](#))

(71) The word “supernatural” should be used with care because it can get misinterpreted as “magic”. It emerged in the medieval period and didn’t exist in the ancient world.³¹

(72) The first commandment is to love God and to not venerate any other idol. Saying that God is the Lord and that His name is hallowed means that no human teaching can claim to be absolutely true or to have authority over others.

Step 2 : Develop a platform for dialogue

(73) Many authors, ranging from independent bloggers to renowned communities, contribute to the teachings of the Church when they write about the Gospel on their websites. It is their human right to express their opinions. Nothing that has been published can be made undone. This is why no organization can have the power to censor what is being said.

(74) Rather than controlling published content of individual contributors, the Church should use the Internet more actively and develop an open standard to reliably manage comments about teachings so that every reader can see what the Church has to say about a particular teaching.

(75) For the end users, this system could be a browser plug-in that tells them for every page they are viewing information of style “This content is approved by X and contested by Y”. End users could also have an option to explicitly request a review for a given teaching for which no comment has been published so far.

Step 3 : Increase work with language regulators

(76) The Scriptures are full of poetical and paradoxical language because the mysteries of the faith are beyond human language.

(77) But living and operating together as humans needs communication. Communication needs a human language. Human language is based on vocabulary. A vocabulary is a set of definitions. A definition is a name that has been assigned to a concept (it gives a meaning to a name). God does not assign names to concepts, he leaves that job to us ([Genesis 2:19](#)).

(78) A good definition provides a clear, concrete, complete, correct, coherent and concise³² description of its meaning. It must be concise because all participants of a dialogue need to be able to remember it. Using unclear, vague, incomplete or incoherent definitions can promote disorder.

(79) The Church should increase her collaboration with language regulators. The [Institute of the Estonian Language](#) is the language authority that regulates and maintains the vocabulary for the Estonian language. Wikipedia is the place that unites the work of all language authorities.

31 Benson Saler. Supernatural as a Western Category. 1977. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/640071>

32 7C of communication see e.g. <https://www.managementstudyguide.com/seven-cs-of-effective-communication.htm>

Step 4 : Assume our political role

(80) The political role of the Church is to provide orientation to those who govern the visible world. Let us focus on problems that cause visible harm and suffering to large groups of humans or to the Earth as our common home.

(81) [Fratelli Tutti](#) points out that the big problems of humanity have to do with money and industry. Law systems that allow corporations to make profit by causing harm are sinful. We have a common guilt because our civilization created these laws. God asks us to govern the world ([Genesis 1:26](#)). Money and the “[invisible hand](#)” cannot do this job for us because they are just tools and infrastructures, which can be used for good or for evil purposes.

(82) Our governments give legal approval to private corporations to make profit by cultivating things that are harmful to the humans or to our planet.

- Media industry benefits when people get excited and speak hatefully or tell lies.
- Medical industry benefits when sexual or cosmetic fantasies cause harmful wishes.
- Entertainment, technology and food industry benefits when people get addicted.
- Mass weapon industry benefits when governments get into a fight

(83) The Church should help governments to identify harmful laws and to imagine innovative ways to change them. This is especially important when a required change is against the interest of private corporations that are more powerful than their national government.

(84) The Church should develop her competence as the most independent and trustworthy advisory service provider to those who rule the *visible world*.

Conclusion

(85) The fundamental problem of the Church in Estonia is that she happens to wear her coat inside-out: when she lacks the skill of speaking clearly, says things that seem to be in contradiction with common sense, paints a “magical” picture of faith, focuses on moral traditions. We fail to announce the Gospel to those who would need it most.

(86) We identified four steps the Spirit invites us to take together with the world-wide Church: (1) Learn to use plain language, (2) Develop a platform for dialogue, (3) Increase work with language regulators and (4) Assume our political role.