To be Church in partnership!
For a cooperation in partnership of men and women in the Church
Based on Vatican II (1962 – 1975), the ‘Würzburg synod’ (1971 – 1975) and the Pastoral Letter of the German bishops concerning “The position of women in Church and society” the Katholischer Deutscher Frauenbund (KDFB) requests of those who are responsible in the Church to grant women a stronger participation in all aspects of ecclesiastical life.

Whenever tasks and ministries are further developed, we see that men and women can participate with equal rights and on equal standing according to their competences, charisma and involvement in the realities of life.

According to the official statement voted at our General Assembly in 2011, and as active co-organizers of ecclesiastical life, we plead for a credible, missionary and forward looking church. We engage with the challenges of our time, want to communicate with those responsible in the Church and commit ourselves to a constructive collaboration of women and men, priests and laypeople.
For a cooperation in partnership of men and women in the Church

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them…” (Gen 1,27)

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Gal 3, 28)
In their pastoral letter of 1981 “The position of women in church and society” the German bishops outline explicitly the opportunities and challenges of a cooperation in partnership of women and men. They pointed out important changes in society which have led to the “full equality of women and their participation in and responsibility for all areas of life. They valued highly the commitment of Catholic women and women organisations which contributed a lot to establishing gender equality in society. At the same time they elaborated the challenges for life in the Church: “As women perform an ever more active function in the whole life of society it is of great importance that they have an equal share in the different fields of apostolate of the Church.

The Frauenbund endorses this request and the subsequent mandate for us Christians. By underlining this position we are contributing to dialogue and are open for discussions leading to a process of changes.

Changes within society challenge us Christians (male and female) to examine anew how a compassionate church can exist. In reviewing further development of ministries, tasks and vocations and their respective ways of realisation men and women are both equally able to respond from their treasure of competence, charism and experience of life. Several surveys of adolescents reveal that the unequal treatment of women in the Church is no longer understood by young people, and that the question of gender equality will be decisive for the future existence of our Church.

The point is for the Church, according to the mandate of its Founder, to develop more and more into the one and only People of God, where men and women, individually and all together, depending on each person’s way, participate in the ministry of prophet, priest and pastor of Jesus Christ.
According to documents of Vatican II, the priesthood of all believers is a fundamental tenet of our belief and understanding. Through baptism all men and women are qualified and called to achieve God’s mandate and to act in His world.

Therefore we confirm the petition submitted by the German bishops to the Roman congregation for canon law—following the suggestion of the Würzburg synod, that is to admit women to all services of the common priesthood of all believers.

**We expect**
- a renewal of this initiative and its implementation in consistent action.
Cooperative leadership of parishes and chances for assignments

One of the most important “lebensraum” (living space) for believers is the local parish. An intensive pastoral care strategy is called due to decrease in numbers owing to demographical changes and people abandoning the Church. However, in more and more bigger ‘parish- unions’ it becomes even more difficult to celebrate the eucharist in common, to care for individual parish members and to live faith together. Due to this difficult situation parish leaders are confronting enormous challenges.

In order to bear responsibilities in the parishes in a spirit of partnership we need a good cooperation between those who represent the priesthood of all believers and those who assume the priesthood of service and ministry. Only in this way the diversity of all proved forms of a good partnership can materialize.

We are requesting
• that models of cooperative leadership in parishes are developed, promoted, tested and implemented in the dioceses. A special chance should be given to the assignment of full-time and voluntary collaborators for specific ministries and services. Women and men should be equally engaged.
A cooperation in partnership arises when it is realised and experienced at all levels. In the Church these fields of actions comprise fulltime jobs as well as old and new forms of honorary office.

In some dioceses women are participating in leading positions. Sensitivity for such a participation has increased. Nevertheless the percentage of women who are really represented in leading positions in the Church is still very small.

**We are requesting**
- to take account of women according to their qualification, competence and number if leading positions within the Church are vacant.

The often repeated practise, namely of filling service and ministry positions which do not imply the sacrament of ordination exclusively with priests, has to be revised. The Church needs a transparent and sustainable human resources pool of personnel for full-time and voluntary services and functions that allows women a just share in leading positions and tasks. What is needed are job models that are flexible and admit new forms of management.

If vacancies in leading positions have to be filled then all the possibilities permitted by Canon Law to include lay people and especially women should be exhausted.
Diaconate of women

Our Church understands itself as a church alongside the poor. To be credible she has to strengthen her profile of charity and diaconia. The mandate for diaconia given to all Christians, men and women, is also represented in the sacramental form of diaconate. As the charitable work is mainly executed by women, they are indispensable as deaconesses.

The theological concept of ministries has developed historically. The current expressions are only a snapshot of our times. Furthermore, as far as the question of ministries is concerned, the Church has always reacted to the challenges of the respective time and the social surroundings, and consequently adapted its own theology of ministries.

If the Church deliberates today on the organisation of ordained ministries she has to take into account the whole treasure of ecclesiastical traditions. The arguments against admission of women to ordained ministries do not convince us. The time has come to ordain women to the diaconate.

We support

• the network “diaconate for women”.
With the annual celebration of the “day of deaconness”, started on April 29th, 1998 in memory of the festive day of St. Catherine of Siena, the Frauenbund invites everybody to reflect on this urgent question.
Women work in many areas of Church life and assume responsibility. Accordingly they expect a just participation in financial decisions at all levels (parish, diocese, nation), because these decisions are core toe-holds for the organisation of ecclesiastical life. It is exactly here where interests and needs of women occur.

In Germany the financial practise of dioceses and parishes is manifold. Already the inconsistent working method of the councils for allocation of church taxes reveals this clearly: in some cases women can adhere to these councils via voting procedures, in others not. Quite often there is insufficient information as to who participates in which decision.

As an organisation of catholic women
- We request that women at all levels have access to decision making with regard to Church financial matters. We also request that women be represented in greater numbers through voting procedures in the councils for allocation of church taxes.
- We support women who are getting involved in financial matters, and who are forming networks.
- We ask for more transparency in the management of the financial affairs of the Church.
Women in science and teaching

All the urgent challenges of our time require an ongoing theologian-scientific discourse together with practical application. A gender balanced Church also needs a strong theology by women. Professional female scientists and theologians set their own strong emphases, thus contributing in an essential way to a dialogue on gender justice in Church and society.

We honour the achievements of women who work scientifically within theologian disciplines for a liberating interpretation and exegesis of Christian traditions.

Theological research and teaching need the freedom of science. Diverging opinions concerning the interpretation of ecclesiastical doctrine, tradition and catholic experience today are inevitable.

We plead
• for an open and constructive culture of debate within the Church. Then conflicts concerning the legitimacy of doctrine can be debated by means of theological arguments without threat of disciplinary measures as a process of coming to the truth.

We support women
• who join forces in order to discuss and share a strong theology among themselves and with others. In this spirit the Frauenbund has founded in 1998 the theologian-network “AGENDA – Forum of Catholic women theologians”.

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In concluding our invitation for dialogue we express a vision for the future that:

Women and men who feel called through the Spirit and grace to ministries within the Church can follow their vocation.

Do you have any questions or suggestions?
Please contact www.frauenbund.de