



Community around a campfire

Troop on a hike

Workers constructing a town worth living in

Three images of the DPSG for its being Church



A word in advance

To describe the Church, the Bible already uses an abundance of different images which complement one another. In the following, we are using three images to help us describe crucial points of how we perceive ourselves as DPSG, which is a part of the Church. Much of it is already being lived out in our local groups and units. Other parts are targets which we want to move towards as an organisation. We use biblical images: of God revealing himself to Moses in the fire from the midst of a bush (Exodus 3) and sending His spirit in tongues of fire on the first Pentecost (Acts of the Apostles 2); of the exodus of God's people from Egypt to the Promised Land and later into exile (Exodus 2, Kings); finally, of God's realm among the people (Revelations 21), of the community as God's building (1st Corinthians, 3) and the concern about the well-being of the city (Jeremiah 29).



The pictures created describe important ideas to us. They are open for supplementary perspectives. We know that they are sometimes at odds with how we experience the Church today. We feel a painful discrepancy between the requirements of the Gospel and the reality of the Church that we often perceive as being frightening instead of reassuring, as confining instead of liberating and as doubting instead of trusting. The images should be hopeful concepts which we should aim to approach as a youth organisation and as a Church. If we use them for our orientation, this will lead to consequences for our life and our actions in the organisation, as well as for the targets, education and structures of the DPSG.

Community around a campfire

The first Church image provides a visual representation on how we experience with our faith – the Church that we want to be as Scouts in the DPSG can be compared to a community around a campfire.

Fire attracts and allows a sense of community to evolve

A campfire radiates a great fascination. Fire is more than a chemical process. A person sitting during the night around a campfire experiences a feeling of mystery. Fire attracts people from different origins to come and look at the flickering flames, to listen to its crackling noise and to feel its irrepressible energy and heat. The warming light of a campfire allows people to come and gather around it and thus to form a community. They start up conversations and, as a result establish a relationship, celebrate and grieve together, talk to one another, start questioning, contemplating, planning, dreaming, ...

God is like fascinating fire

The fire of God is the unfathomable, greatest secret of our world and our life, and has a fascinating and attractive effect. Just as fire provides heat and light, we repeatedly experience the fire of God as being a source of power for our life and our faith. Like a campfire, the fire of God connects people of completely different origins to form the Church community. Books could be filled with the stories of individuals, of their dreams, longings and fears. God, who is close to us in love through Jesus Christ, embodies the hub around which the community of believers gather. God is so close to us people that he himself became a person in Jesus: vulnerable, manifest and experienceable. In him, it becomes clear in a unique way, how we people should live in God's eyes. Everyone finds their own place in relation to this central figure; the appearance and origin of the individual are not important. In the Church, the triune God and his devotion to us people come first and foremost, not the dominance and power of people.

A campfire invites openness and wideness

At the campfire, each person has his own distance away from the fire where he feels comfortable. Some people sit near to the fire – they are cold and are looking for heat: Some people are too warm there – they turn away, walk about a bit into the darkness or sit down further away from it. The faces of some people are illuminated brightly by the fire, some look for the shadow. Each individual person looks for his or her own place, sometimes near, sometimes far away, sometimes in the light, sometimes in the darkness. Yet the one thing they all have in common is that they are positioned somewhere in relation to the fire. Everyone, whether further away or right at the centre of the circle, belongs to the group. A community around a campfire requires openness and wideness. There is no separating border. Only sometimes does one person obstruct another person's access to the fire or view of the fire.

The same applies to the community of the Church: there are different ways of belonging, some are close and others apparently very liberal. God's Church, the community of Jesus Christ, is wider than the group of people who attend church services and wider than the circle of registered church members. All people are called to join this global, open community.

Rituals create community and open up spaces

For Scouts, the evening campfire is a ritual where the same actions and roles are repeated: building and igniting the fire, putting more firewood onto the fire and collective singing accompanied by a guitar. Rituals provide a feeling of security and build companionship. This also applies for the rituals which the DPSG maintains from the tradition of the Scout movement and the Church. They simultaneously open up room for self-contemplation and for personal experiences with God.

Fire needs to be tended and cared for

A fire needs to be tended and cared for. This also applies to a person's relationship with God. God Himself is the one who was and always is. But the relationship with Him must be looked after – as is the case with every relationship. Otherwise it will suffer harm or die out. Sometimes it is also necessary to be protected from the fire. Not everyone can bear the heat of the fire. Some people come too close. God Himself warns Moses: "Draw not nigh hither!" (Exodus 3,5). We are responsible for ourselves and for each other – also in our relationship with God.

Fire spreads

Fire spreads. There are people in the Church who allow themselves to be ignited by the spirit of God and who pass on the sparks of enthusiasm; who do not tend the ashes of used traditions but rather open up a gateway for the living fire. This is done through word and deed, through lived hope and active solidarity, in prayer, church services and a relationship with God which is lived out each day. The great community of the Church lives in the many small communities which make up the groups, Group Councils and local groups of our organisation.

Troop on a hike

A second image turns the perspective mainly towards the community: the Church that we aim to be as Scouts, is compared to a troop on a hike.

We are on a path together, one which will bring many adventures. Difficult situations must be mastered and uncomfortable distances must be covered. Yet, on the other hand, there are beautiful stretches, relaxing campgrounds and experiences which are full of fun and good moods. The target being focussed on is the path tread along together.

The love of God can be felt along the way

This is how we envisage the community of the Church. It is on a path to a common goal: to reach God and His kingdom. Yet what is important is the path which leads to this goal. For then, through *the way in which* the path is covered together – the love and spirit of God can already be experienced during the journey: Through the dedication towards the weak, through the application of one's own strengths and abilities towards the collective, through the decisions made together regarding the right path to take. On this journey, Jesus is our companion, He helps when our strengths fail us and reinforces our community.

Orientation according to the compass needle which is Jesus

The troop on the hike searches for orientation again and again during their journey. It looks for signposts, uses a map and compass and listens to the experience of individuals who may have already passed through this area. For us, such signposts are the values which we in the DPSG convincingly fill with life. This is how we find orientation for our path through life. Just as a compass needle reliably points north, Jesus Christ, His life and His glad tidings give orientation to our community as a Church on our way. His spirit accompanies us and encourages each individual.

Everyone participates in deciding which direction to take

At a crossroads, a group on a hike must clarify which direction to take, keep sight of the destination and decide upon a path. This does not always work with the whole group reaching a full consensus, but it will also not work if an individual dictates.

For us as a Church, this also means that everyone participates in decisions: children and adults, women and men, priests and laymen. No-one is more important than the others. Nevertheless, there are different tasks and functions along the common path to suit the talents of the individuals. Some know the path particularly well and can provide orientation; others can motivate and spur on those who are dispirited; others have the ability to ask uncomfortable questions if necessary; others again can mediate disputes or support those who are weaker. If everyone uses their abilities and talents for the good of the others, a true community can be created.

Everyone uses their abilities so that the hike can succeed

What is clearly shown during the hike: for it to succeed, the troop members must bring along their own strengths and abilities. Questions and doubts are also important and have their place. Through this, different tasks emerge. Even so, each person needs the others for the endeavour as a whole to succeed. The ones who can do something better support those who are weaker. Big protects small. Everyone travels along the entire path together, with all its ups and downs. Everyone is on a journey towards the same destination. The common path changes those people who travel along it. They develop their abilities, find out new things about themselves through their discussions with the others in the troop, learn how to deal with being on the wrong track and with failings and continue to develop as a person.

Workers constructing a town worth living in

A third image now turns our attention to our actions derived from faith. What distinguishes us as Scouts is the fact that we do not just lie back and take things easy. Our faith is displayed in our actions.

The Church we would like to be as DPSG members can be compared to construction workers building a town worth living in.

Many people live in a town and shape it

There are many people living together in a town: old and young, healthy and sick, rich and poor, black and white, men and women ...; people with different gifts, ways of life, cultures and religions. They all help design this town in accordance with their own ideas, skills and needs. As a result, there are a lot of building sites in this town. New buildings and districts are created, old buildings are knocked down, renovated or modernised.

Construction workers work together with their diverse talents

Construction workers who want to design a town worth living in develop their plans for cohabitation in it and turn these plans into reality through their thoughts, feelings and actions. With their diverse talents, they help out in the areas where help is needed: One person as an architect, the other as a bricklayer, and others as digger operators, electricians or computer experts. They work together with others who are working towards similar targets to the mutual benefit of one another. The incentive for their commitment is their vision of a town in which everyone can live fairly and peacefully in harmony with creation.

Our task to shape the world

As the DPSG, our vision of how we should live together in society emanates from our belief in Jesus Christ – *metaphorically speaking* – as the building owner who is giving us the contract to shape the sense of the world in which we live. As members of the Scout movement, our aim is to leave the world a slightly better place than how we found it. Just as Jesus always moved excluded people, the poor and the sick from the edge of society to its centre, we also want to create spaces worth living in, particularly for these people and together with those who are not able to do so using their own power alone. In all of our plans and actions, we trust in and feel the spirit of God who gives us ideas and strength.

Living spaces are created

Using their vision and the building plans developed from them, the construction workers erect buildings, living spaces which can be used by the people of the town: meeting places for different cultures, barrier-free centres of urban districts and churches and monasteries, areas of peace and quiet, music bars and youth centres, as well as innovative factories with new jobs

“The creation of such living spaces” can mean for us in the DPSG, for example: to be advocates for children and youths, to provide commitment for people who are pushed to the edge of our society, commitment to development policy, helping shape the political and Church community, . . .

Limits hinder and challenge

When doing so, the construction workers repeatedly reach their limits: they have limited manpower, construction equipment and financial resources; the people who live in the town often have completely different ideas and plans which stand in the way of their building project. The councillors sometimes abuse their power to prevent undesirable projects. However, maybe they will succeed in convincing others and finding alliance partners. Finally, there are limits to the town development: for example, the necessary infrastructure is not available for new buildings in the open countryside. Old edifices and rows of houses may be listed monuments and cannot be knocked down to make way for new ones. However, maybe they can be carefully converted to suit the changed needs. After all, the aim is not to preserve the historical town as a museum, but rather to use the old and new building fabric to design a town worth living in, one which can meet the changing needs of its citizens.

As the DPSG, we experience the same thing when shaping the Church and and community: there are groups who have completely different ideas and who can thwart our plans. There are traditions which seem impossible to change . . .

We live as an example

Even so, we will not allow ourselves to be discouraged. We set an example in the way we work together with solidarity, how we include those concerned, how we deal with criticism, deal with conflicts in good spirit and can celebrate successes exuberantly. Through our actions, we in the DPSG are simultaneously a living example of how the Church and society can live together successfully. We would like to be a symbol of hope for others and hope that our actions have positive repercussions.