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## Fundamentals

*... Seeking God in all things,  
Preferring nothing to Christ,  
Leading our lives under the  
guidance of the gospel.*

The Community Casteller Ring is a religious community of women within the Lutheran Church, living according to the Rule of St. Benedict.

We are called individually to follow Jesus Christ, but we dare to share monastic life in a community for life. Fundamental is the gospel. We pray the monastic office (or hours) four times a day and celebrate the presence of God in the eucharist and the gospel. This is the centre and the vocation of our life.

There was a renewal of spiritual life after the Second World War, and this led to the beginning of our community in 1950. Christel Schmid and Maria Pfister began the common life at Castell (Lower Franconia, in Bavaria). Soon the house at Castell became too small and Schwanberg (a hill, 10 km away from Castell) became the centre of the community and a conference centre.

We try to recognize the signs of the time and to interpret them and contribute to building up the church of Jesus Christ within this world. We want to be free for God and people and the coming of His kingdom.

We stand in expectation of Rev 22:

*The Spirit and the Bride say 'Come'.  
And let him who hears it say, 'Come'*

## Vocation

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We try to seek God in each experience of life and to deepen our relationship to God. We have private quiet time and spiritual direction and this helps us to grow to personal maturity which is important for the community as a whole. Chastity, having everything in common, and adult obedience are the limitations we accept for our lives so that we may go deeper in our relationship to Jesus Christ. We make life vows and so win inner freedom.

We live in a rhythm of work and prayer.

Prayer puts into words what moves us as well as the world. In singing the psalms in a listening way there is room for adoration and complaint, supplication and thanksgiving. We celebrate the eucharist frequently and this helps our inward growth towards God, individually as well as the whole community.

We work to earn our living and so share the conditions of everybody else.

There is a continuous tension between work and prayer (active and contemplative life) and the desire that "God may be glorified in all things". (1 Peter 4:11/ RB 57:9)

## Community

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As we are accepted by God we also learn to accept each other. This is the necessary presupposition for our common life. We want to be open to each other and trusting, and we appreciate the other sister. Of course we are very different from each other. This makes common life rich and a challenge.

We strive to get along with each other, and when there is a conflict we work hard to find a solution, and experience that reconciliation is a gift of God. Our enclosure has rooms for talking and for silence, for common meals and festivities. We care for each other in times of illness, in old age and in dying.

It takes at least five years to grow into our community. The first stage of our life is the postulancy, then the novitiate, temporary vows, and finally life vows.

All the professed sisters form the chapter, in which all the important questions are discussed and decisions are made. The chapter also elects the prioress for a limited time. Other sisters are elected or called by the prioress to share the responsibility with her. We try to be open with each other and to achieve consensus in order to build up trust.

Not all problems can be solved within the community. In some cases we ask other people for advice. We trust in the work of the Holy Spirit but know that each sister must be responsible.

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## Tasks

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Living according to the gospel we are “light of the world” and “salt of the earth” (Matt 5:13,14). Our central task is to live truly according to our vocation and to be “witnesses with our whole existence” (Reinhold Schneider). Each sister is a witness wherever she is.

We endeavour to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and help people to experience the faith with our whole being. In the course of the church year we again and again celebrate the great deeds of God. We try to bring to life the tradition of the church in a creative way.

We strive to make people feel welcome in our church, in our conference centre on Schwanberg and in our branch-house at Erfurt and want to pass on what we have been given. We want to share our lives with them and hope to be transparent to what inspires us.

Rooted in Jesus Christ and called by him we are ready to be sent to the tasks and places which need us today.

## The Network

There are many relationships around us: there are people who form a circle round us and who share our spiritual life to some extent and support or sponsor our work.

We confess the one church which is the body of Christ according to the New Testament, and we contribute to the growing of the unity of the church. We are rooted in the Lutheran Church, have ecumenical contacts and go to conferences. We have close contacts with other religious communities, convents and monasteries.

We are part of our society and engage ourselves in special projects in our vicinity.

With this introduction we have outlined a framework which is binding for us, but at the same time we are open to further development. In all our connections we feel committed to the basic profile which is rooted in the gospel:

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guidance of the gospel. (RB)*

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# The Community Casteller Ring



## Introduction