

Guidelines for Using the Church for Non-Church Purposes

Historical-Theological Context

The Elisabeth Church was consecrated in 1864 as a Reformed Church, dedicated for liturgical use with a sermon from the then Church Council President from the pulpit. The pulpit traditionally holds a significant role in Reformed liturgical practice. According to the General Reformed Prayer Book of 1954: "The preacher ascends the pulpit during the entrance hymn and only moves to the altar during the intercessory prayer." The pulpit is the "preaching chair," where the sermon begins with the reading of God's holy word and is subsequently interpreted. The person speaking from the pulpit derives significance only through the word of God located there.

In Roman Catholic tradition, the consecrated altar holds a similar significance: it is reserved for prayer and the celebration of Holy Communion.

Current Usage

As a largely economically independent institution, OKE relies on self-generated funds, primarily through renting out the church building for various purposes. During these rentals, the church transforms from a house of worship into a beautiful, festive, and spacious neo-Gothic venue.

Many items of ecclesiastical significance (choir stalls, pews, windows) are reinterpreted for non-church use, but not devalued. This is understandable and acceptable given the mission and operations of OKE.

A guideline from a German Protestant regional church in 2009 states: "When renting out or using the space for non-church purposes, it is crucial to ensure that such use does not create counter or distorted symbolism to the dedication purpose of the room. This particularly applies when areas, vestments, or items of ecclesiastical significance are used in similar ways but with different objectives."

Use of OKE's Church Building

OKE manages the Elisabeth Church ecumenically and operates it as a post-denominational church, interpreting old Christian traditions in a modern way. OKE provides renters with the entire space for non-church use, with a few exceptions.

Offene Kirche Elisabethen

Ereignisort im Basler Zentrum – vielfältig, offen, belebt

Prohibited Uses in the Offenen Kirche Elisabethen

- Non-church events that mimic religious ceremonies, such as baptisms, confirmations, weddings, or funerals without an ordained pastor from one of the three Christian regional churches, are not allowed. Exceptions are decided by the OKE management.
- Events that glorify violence, promote sexism or racism, discredit human dignity, or exclude individuals or groups are prohibited.
- Events that violate or disregard the law are not permitted.
- Events that misuse or misinterpret the symbolic meaning of the church building, such as through parodic use or citation of ecclesiastical items, areas, or vestments, are not allowed.
- All events not approved by OKE management are prohibited.

Use of Altar and Pulpit

For theological reasons, OKE management has decided to restrict the use of the altar and pulpit for secular purposes. The altar may only be used if it is rolled away or covered, thus clearly removing it from its ritual use and prominent position.

Pulpit use is limited to very few exceptions, such as speeches by elected officials at official events.

The pulpit may be used discreetly, with prior approval from OKE management, by photographers or camera operators for brief and specific photo or video recordings.

Frank Lorenz

Managing Director

Note: This is a translation from the original German version available on www.your-venue-basel.com. Translation errors may be present. The legal version is the German text, and the English version is for informational purposes only.