



Free Church of the Seventh-day Adventists
Hanseatic Association

Hamburg, 17.04.24

Seventh-day Adventist Free Church
Grindelberg 15a | 20144 Hamburg

Dear community leaders, dear colleagues,

On the Sabbath of April 13, 2024, before the church service, I had to make the following announcement to the Grindelberg community: by mutual agreement between the Hanseatic Conference and Saša Gunjević, the employment relationship has been terminated.

At this point I would like to emphasize the wording again: by mutual agreement. This is what we are talking about when it is not a matter of termination, but rather the cancellation of an employment contract. There was no disagreement here in the assessment of revoking the service contract.

And of course there are reasons. Saša has become dear to all of us as a person who is as impulsive and passionate as he is honest and transparent. It cannot be said that he piously preached one thing and lived the other. Rather, he was criticized for depicting too much honest life in his sermons. A core part of his preaching was always the deep conviction: *Be honest and take responsibility for your life. God wants to be by your side.* The understanding I'm talking about here refers to the fact that he's at a point in his life where the best way to do just that is to no longer have the additional responsibilities of being a pastor. This formulation regarding the background was agreed upon with him and Saša was there on April 13th, present in the community.

Two virtues represent the values of our Christian community, which create spaces for growth and healing, but which are always in competition with one another: transparency and secrecy. Community needs transparency. By this we also mean openness and honesty, the ability to endure hearing what is difficult.

At the same time, secrecy is also required. Not everything belongs in every ear or in public. In difficult conflicts, the means of protecting people is secrecy. Sometimes it is not just a virtue but a commandment. And in this case it is even a legal requirement, because details regarding the termination of an employment relationship are subject to the legally required confidentiality, at least for the employer.

Please note: the employment relationship was not terminated because pressure was built up from above as part of the conflicts within the church surrounding the issue of LGBTQ+. There is no causal connection between Saša's coming out in January 2023 or his advocacy for the rights of queer people and current developments.

We would like to thank Saša for the great gifts he brought here as pastor: his lively proclamation, his passionate commitment to minorities, his tenacity for change, his missionary vision and his cheerful nature.

Kind regards, Dennis Meier

Free Church of the Seventh-day Adventists, in the state of Bremen KdöR, in Hamburg KdöR, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania KdöR, Lower Saxony KdöR and Schleswig-Holstein KdöR

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