

EMSINSIGHTS

1/2022



CULTIVATE AND GUARD GOD'S CREATION

MAIN FEATURE GHANA TO BECOME GREEN AGAIN

Reforestation and upcycling for an intact environment

A TINY VIRUS HAS TAUGHT US HOW VULNERABLE WE ARE

Theological reflection from South India

“WE DO NOT HAVE MUCH TIME LEFT”

Interview with Youth Representative David William Daniels



Evangelical Mission
in Solidarity



NOW IS THE TIME TO ACT!

What does mission have to do with the environment? And why is EMS concerned at all about environmental issues? That’s what a German businesswoman asked me recently. The answer to this question was given by the young people who met last September for a conference in Ghana to celebrate the 50th anniversary of EMS.

For the conference delegates, mission is more than just a change in faith. For them, mission means changing a whole way of life. Mission is a „society-changing movement“ that comes from God and in which people participate. And they expect churches to be a witness to this mission of God in the world. For these young people, preservation of the creation is literally a matter of survival: „The effects of climate change, the destruction of biodiversity and the ruthless exploitation of natural resources are already clearly visible in many of our home countries.“ They emphatically demand: „Now is the time to act!“

The EMS International Mission Council has adopted „Integrity of Creation“ as a priority theme for the Church’s work in the coming years. The EMS will raise the voice on God’s behalf when it comes to preserving His creation. This is indeed part of our mission. To achieve this, the EMS will bring together the experiences of people from different parts of the world. This is because the consequences of one’s own actions for the environment often do not show up locally at all, but crop up at totally different locations in the world. This issue of Insights contains examples of people’s efforts in the EMS. They have understood one thing: „Now is the time to act!“

Rev. Dr Dieter Heidtmann,
General Secretary of the EMS

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25 churches and 5 mission societies in Asia, Africa, Europe and the Middle East form a network of well-established long-term partnerships – as a Christian fellowship they share resources, learn from and with one another and make decisions.

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„The future of our fragile, beautiful planet home is in our hands. As God’s family, we are stewards of God’s creation. We can be wantonly irresponsible, or we can be caring and compassionate. God says, „I have set before you life and death... Choose life.“

Desmond Tutu



MAIN FEATURE

CULTIVATE AND GUARD GOD’S CREATION

The impact of climate change on our world cannot be overlooked. But what do we as Christians understand by God’s command to “work and keep” His creation? Can we deduce any specific instructions for sustainable and ecologically responsible action from the Bible? More and more member churches and mission agencies of the EMS are responding to this question with a resounding Yes! We present some examples in this issue.

GHANA TO BECOME GREEN AGAIN

The Presbyterian Church of Ghana is actively focusing its efforts for sustainability and environmental protection on large-scale tree planting campaigns.

Pages 4–8

A TINY VIRUS HAS TAUGHT US HOW VULNERABLE WE ARE

Nature is not our property. Theological reflection from South India on the divine interconnectedness of all life.

Page 9

STRONG NETWORKS

Together against domestic violence, for peace and reconciliation and a child-friendly church.

Pages 10/11

SUPPORT US

In the „Green School“ project of the Church of South India, boys and girls become environmental managers.

Pages 12/13

EMS NEWS

Sustainability: EMASplus, an eco-management system for companies and organisations, Annual Results 2021 and aid during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Pages 14/15

ASSOCIATION NEWS

Pages 16/17

“WE DO NOT HAVE MUCH TIME LEFT”

Integrity of creation and biblical responsibility from the viewpoint of the youth representative in the EMS Mission Council.

Pages 18/19

OUTLOOK

Sing along with us! “Together we are free!”

Page 20



GHANA TO BECOME GREEN AGAIN

REFORESTATION AND UPCYCLING
FOR AN INTACT ENVIRONMENT

In the West African country of Ghana, humans are the greatest threat to the environment. Above all, illegal mining, large-scale deforestation and the improper disposal of plastic waste, electronic scrap or wrecked cars result in severe, often irreparable damage to the ecosystem. Politicians are aware of this, but they obviously lack the will to take concrete measures.

On the other hand, more and more churches and non-governmental organisations consider the protection of the environment an essential part of their mission – including the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG). One of its activities is to participate in the annual „Green Ghana Day“ by planting trees. The Ghanaian EMS member church is deeply concerned about the high level of environmental destruction the country has experienced in recent years.

Climate change is also hitting the country hard. Although Ghana only has an annual per capita emission of about 0.4 tonnes of CO₂ (Germany: about 11 tonnes of CO₂), it is one of the countries in the Global South that already bears a large share of the climate risks. The impacts are particularly strong in agriculture and forestry. In addition, climate change is resulting in more and more severe natural disasters. For example, four million people have been affected by floods in the last 40 years; in 2015 alone, a flash flood in the Ghanaian capital of Accra caused US\$55 million of damage. According to a World Bank report, environmental damage costs Ghana US\$6.3 billion annually, or almost eleven per cent of its gross domestic product (as of: 2017).

Ghana is one of the countries in the Global South that is already bearing a large share of the climate risks.

Ghana has lost about one third of its original forest area in the last 30 years. The Presbyterian Church of Ghana started a campaign in 2019 to reverse this trend. In cooperation with the Ghana Forestry Authority, it has launched a five-year national campaign for hygiene and a clean environment („Ecological Integrity“). „Our faith obliges us as Christians to be good stewards of the resources God has entrusted to us,“ points out Rev. Joseph Obiri Yeboah Mante, Moderator of

the PCG (Editor’s note: moderator corresponds to the rank of bishop in other churches). Promoting ecological integrity is one of the main tasks Mante has set himself for his term of office.

The PCG regards tree planting as an important part of the Church’s witness for the environment. It therefore supports the government’s efforts to re-green Ghana and restore lost forest reserves. The PCG has therefore decided to plant one million trees. The 1 Million Trees Project is intended to help reverse environmental damage and reduce the effects of global warming.

GOAL: ONE MILLION TREES

The Reformed churches, which are spread throughout the English-speaking world, have known the „Arbor Day“ since the 1920s. This tradition originated in Nebraska (USA), where the first „Arbor Day“ was celebrated in 1874 to oppose deforestation. In launching its tree planting campaign, the PCG associated itself with „International Forest Day“, which actually takes place in March. However, since heavy rains are not expected until June, the so-called „Green Ghana Day“ will not take place until 11 June. The tree planting campaign was divided into two stages: Schools and academic institutions started on 3 June. This was followed by presbyteries, districts and communities on 11 June 2021. A total of 300,000 trees were planted on the two days. For 2022, the PCG has set itself an even higher target and wants to reach the one million mark.

Rafael Dreyer is pastor of the German-speaking Protestant congregation in Accra. As project manager, he helped organise the nationwide tree planting campaign for „Green Ghana Day“ in schools and in the congregations. „The greening tree, a beautiful symbol of the Garden of Eden and of the Creator’s love for us humans, should never fall victim to concrete deserts,“ says Dreyer, who was sent to Ghana by the EMS as ecumenical co-worker in 2017. „Each individual as a creature shall prosper, as Jeremiah writes: ‘Blessed are those who trust in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. He is like a tree planted by the water, stretching out his roots to the brook. For though the heat comes, yet he does not fear, but his leaves remain green, and he does not worry when a dry year comes, but bears fruit without ceasing.’“

“The tree, a symbol of the Garden of Eden and of the Creator’s love for us humans, should never fall victim to concrete deserts.”



WASTE RECYCLING, WASTE AVOIDANCE

The PCG runs more than 2,400 educational institutions, from kindergartens to primary schools and high schools. At PCG schools, the theme of environmental protection is not just a subject in the school curriculum about planting trees. Students are also taught about the correct way to handle waste and about waste disposal, recycling and avoidance. Sponsorship from the Evangelical Church of the Palatinate and the Working Group for World Mission in Austria has made it possible to buy large rubbish bins of different colours (see photo on p. 7). They have been initially installed at 13 schools to teach practical waste separation. In addition, a total of 250 pupils have learnt new methods of creatively recycling waste in six upcycling workshops. For example, they have made flowerpots out of plastic bottles under the guidance of the „Plastic Punch“ team, a well-known NGO from Accra that organises beach clean-ups and campaigns against plastic waste. In addition, school trips have been made to several recycling plants in the Greater Accra area, where organic waste is converted into fertiliser and sewage into biogas. Hopefully, this exemplary project work will spread and be taken up by more and more schools.

WAYS OUT OF THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

Thoughts by Rev. George Larbi (PCG) on solving environmental and health problems in Ghana. He takes up suggestions from the Ghanaian Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA).

Political leaders need to rethink and find the will to solve the problems. To do this, environmental, health and safety issues must be separated from politics and specific efforts must be made to promote environmental health. The state must provide ministries and agencies with adequate funds so that they can effectively carry out work to combat environmental problems.

Businesses, organisations such as the Presbyterian Church of Ghana and scientists must be supported with loans and tax exemptions so that they can expand their commitment to the environment. Beyond national borders, the United Nations and institutions such as the European Commission must establish a reward system that provides financial compensation to countries that preserve their environment and natural resources.

After all, we must always bear in mind: What happens in one country is not without consequences for other countries. For example, the effects of dumping sewage into the ocean in Ghana and the disposal of plastic waste and the deforestation caused by illegal mining can be felt as far away as Europe and North America.

George Larbi



Plastic, paper or cans? With rubbish bins like these, pupils are introduced to the topic of recycling in a playful way.

*Above:
To mark „Green Ghana Day“, the Presbyterian Church of Ghana planted 300,000 small trees last year.*

GALAMSEY – ILLEGAL GOLD MINING

Besides deforestation and polluting the landscape with waste, illegal open-pit mining, known as „galamsey“ in Ghana, poses a serious threat to the lives, safety and health of many people. Child labour is also common. Ghana is the second largest gold producer on the continent after the Republic of South Africa. About one third of export earnings and 93 per cent of mining production are related to the extraction of gold. A not inconsiderable share of Ghana’s gold is extracted illegally and away from the large gold mines. The local term for this, galamsey, is derived from „gather them and sell“.

Unlike industrial gold mining, the yield from galamsey is low. No one gets rich from it. Most of the time, the workers only find small to very small grains or flakes of gold mixed with sand or clay. To get at them, they are mixed with mercury and chemically bound. When the mixture is heated, the toxic mercury evaporates and the valuable precious metal remains. But mercury is not only extremely harmful to people’s health, it also causes irreparable environmental damage when it accumulates in the soil or enters the water cycle. In many cases, large areas of original rainforest are cleared for

galamsey. What is left behind is soil that is leached, poisoned, devoid of vegetation and vulnerable to erosion and landslides. This also endangers cocoa production, which is a vital produce for Ghana's economy. The PCG therefore calls on all churches and NGOs to work together with the government to reforest the galamsey mining sites and then to protect the rehabilitated areas.

What kind of world do we want to leave future generations?

After God created the Garden of Eden, he entrusted it to man to take care of, to „work it and keep it“. But now God's creation is threatened by man's activities. What kind of world do we want to leave future generations? Since we are all involved in the destruction of the environment, we must also be part of the solution. The Presbyterian Church in Ghana strongly believes that if the environment is treated well, healing and reconciliation are possible.

George Larbi



Rev. George Larbi is Public Relations Officer of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG).



THE PCG – A CHURCH BASED ON THE BASEL TRADITION

With about 950,000 members, the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG) is one of the largest Protestant churches in Ghana. It emerged in 1828 from the work of the Basel Mission and is therefore the oldest of the „Basel churches“. It is one of the 25 member churches of the EMS.

The main administrative offices of the PCG are located in the Ghanaian capital of Accra. Its main body is the Synod (General Assembly) which meets once a year. It is chaired by a moderator who is also the church's highest representative. Joseph Obiri Yeboah Mante has held this office since 2018. The PCG is currently represented in the EMS General Meeting and Mission Council by Rev. Nii Armah Ashithey, Head of Ecumenical and Social Relations.

In addition to its church work, the PCG is active in school and university education, peace work, rural development work and in the health sector. The church is the third largest provider of medical services in Ghana with its four hospitals, eleven primary health care programmes, eight health centres, 13 clinics, two nurse training schools and a technical department.

Find out more about how the PCG supports people in need. Simply scan the QR code on the right and go directly to our projects in Ghana.



A TINY VIRUS HAS TAUGHT US HOW VULNERABLE WE ARE

God speaks through two books: his word (the Bible) and his works (creation). We need both together to understand what is God's message. While in the belly of a giant whale, Jonah prayed to God, repented and praised God. Then Jonah learnt that all men, and women, and little children, whether they know God or not, are precious in the eyes of God. In order to teach this, God used a plant and a little worm.

We have been experiencing floods, earthquakes, cyclones, droughts, landslides during the last decade. The latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) gives a strong warning about the natural calamities in the coming years, yet we are not learning. So eventually, God has sent a strong message through Corona. A tiny particle with no life in itself brought us to a standstill. It does not respect how powerful, religious, spiritual a person is. A tiny virus has taught us how vulnerable we are.

Everything in God's creation obeys a certain rhythm.

According to the book of Genesis, God created land, water, vegetation and animals and allotted habitats for the various species. God allotted the forests in the mountain and hilly areas for wild and poisonous animals. God permitted water to flow in low lying areas, and it became the habitat of aquatic animals. God gave the geographically middle part to human beings and domestic animals as He might have visualised a rhythm. Forests produce oxygen by absorbing the carbon dioxide produced from the plains. The rain falling in the forest is allowed to flow as streams for the wellbeing of God's creations in the plains and valleys. Water from the oceans evaporates and moves as clouds and rain over the forest to repeat the cycle. There also we can see this rhythm.

One of the inevitable results of this cyclicity is that all living and nonliving are interconnected and involved in a constant "give and take". Human beings can use everything as food except poisonous plants and poisonous animals. "You must not eat fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die." This Biblical verse can be paraphrased like this. "You must not eat poisonous plants and animals that are available in plenty and should not enter into shola forests, or you will die."

When you destroy nature, you destroy yourself.

We believe that God loves creation and wants its life to flourish. No creature is different or lower in God's sight. Every creature has its dignity and rights because all are included in God's covenant. So it is said in the story of Noah: „Behold," says God, „I establish my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and every living creature" (Gen 9:9-10). Nature is not our property. ALL Living beings must be respected by humanity as God's partners in the covenant. Whoever destroys nature destroys him/herself. The pandemic period is the right time to think of a new sustainable economy.

C. Fernandas Rathina Raja, General Secretary & Prof. Dr. Mathew Koshy Punnackadu, Hon. Director Ecological Concerns Department, Church of South India



C. Fernandas Rathina Raja



Dr Mathew Koshy Punnackadu

STRONG NETWORKS



INTERNATIONAL VOICE FOR WOMEN

The International Women's Network of the EMS is now well established: Since April last year, Anda Nkosi (picture), a member of the Moravian Church in South Africa, has been working successfully in the team at the Secretariat. Her work as coordinator of the Women's Network has brought about an important change in perspective.

The liaison women, representatives of the women's work of the churches in their region, now form an advisory body for the Women and Gender unit. As a result, international voices are gaining in strength. This is not only an enrichment, but also offers a more comprehensive approach to important women's issues. Eight women now make up the global network with the addition of a representative from the Japanese member church, the KYODAN (United Church of Christ in Japan), and a new position for the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East. They have yet to be joined by a representative from the Korean churches.

The networkers have addressed a common task that has become even more urgent worldwide during the

pandemic, namely domestic violence against women and children. Gender-based violence has been a recurrent issue for the network in recent years. Now the evaluation of a survey conducted by the liaison women in their churches and regions shows the need to introduce clear and very practical measures. It is important to reach as many women as possible and to ensure that concern for victims of domestic violence does not remain a short-term action. Ideally, it will be addressed again and again in the EMS as part of long-term campaign work.

In very concrete terms, the network has opted for training courses in which leaders of congregations, women's, men's and youth groups learn how to deal with victims of domestic violence. Part of this involves networking with regional and government agencies on prevention, counselling and support for women, children and marginalised groups. The EMS Mission Council has made funds available for project applications in this area. In addition, prayers, pictures, biblical reflections, liturgical elements and personal reflections such as testimonies will be compiled for the next issue of „Our Voices“. By the way, the 2022 issue will be an anniversary issue – the popular women's magazine turns thirty this year!

*Dr Kerstin Neumann
Head of the EMS Women
and Gender Unit*



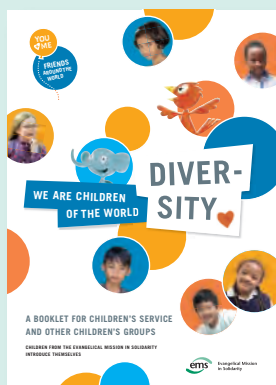
“CHILD-FRIENDLY CHURCH” IN THE EMS

Children play an important role in the EMS. They are the future of the churches and since 2015 the EMS has had its own programme for the youngest called YOU+ME: FRIENDS AROUND THE WORLD. The programme is implemented by an international team.

Rev. Gustina Saruran from the Indonesian Toraja Church has been working for „FRIENDS“ since November 2021. In 2020, the Indonesian churches organised a conference on the topic of children's worship services and subsequently asked the Mission Council to intensify the connection between the children's churches within the EMS Fellowship. The idea behind this is to exchange ideas within a global network on the topic of Child Friendly Church, hold a workshop and developed materials together. Gustina Saruran is currently in the process of creating a workbook on „Integrity of Creation“ with a focus on Indonesia. She is convinced of the idea of focusing church work more on children: „This is based on Christ's command to make children into friends and even role models, since they belong to the kingdom of heaven.“ (Matthew 19:14).

Besides her educational work, Gustina Saruran is responsible for networking the people in charge of the children's worship services in Indonesian member churches. A change in perspective is important to her: „Today, talking about children means talking about the future. When churches start to see children as subjects, it means putting them at the centre of worship. When adults deal with children, they should be familiar with their ways of thinking and behaving.“ To achieve these goals, she is in close dialogue with other churches. In the future, she will coordinate a worldwide exchange on the topic of the Child Friendly Church. Gustina Saruran sees precisely this as an opportunity: „The EMS is working on this great task by expanding cooperation all over the world.“

Annette Schumm
Coordinator of the EMS Children's Programme



You can obtain your free materials for children's worship services at ems-online.org/shop.



World Council of Churches

WCC ASSEMBLY IN KARLSRUHE

Every eight years, the churches of the world gather at the Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC). This year, for the first time in the WCC's 70-year history, they will be convening in Germany.

The 11th WCC Assembly will take place from 31 August to 8 September 2022 in Karlsruhe, in other words in the district of an EMS member church, the Protestant Church in Baden (EKIBA). Pandemic permitting, up to 10,000 national and international guests from 350 churches are expected in Karlsruhe this summer.

The theme of the Assembly is: „Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity“. The churches of the world will meet in Karlsruhe at a time of uncertainty and growing international conflicts. Covid-19, the climate crisis and the war in Ukraine have once again intensified these issues. What contribution can the churches make to a peaceful and united society and what role do they have for social coexistence? This question will be at the centre of consultations.

The heart of the Assembly will be the festival square in Karlsruhe with its fountains (in German "Brunnen"). An ecumenical programme will provide information about current topics and permit encounters with people from all

over the world. Together with two Indonesian member churches, the EMS will organise an event in the "Brunnen" programme: "No witness without witness". The Evangelical Association for the Schneller Schools will offer the event „How Christian educational institutions in the Middle East can promote peace, reconciliation and unity in their respective societies“ as part of the Assembly programme. We also invite Assembly delegates to visit the Secretariat in Stuttgart on Saturday 3 September.

Both individuals and groups are cordially invited to attend the Assembly. Registration is required to enter the Congress Centre and the events taking place there. Attendance at the encounter programme and the cultural events in the city is also possible without registration.

Dr Dieter Heidtmann
EMS General Secretary

www.karlsruhe2022.de
www.oikoumene.org/about-the-wcc/organizational-structure/assembly

CLIMATE PROTECTION ON THE SCHOOL TIMETABLE: THE „GREEN SCHOOL“ PROGRAMME

The international EMS Fellowship is particularly committed to the rights of those who are vulnerable, poor and marginalised. It promotes projects to fight poverty and to work for human rights and peace. Solidarity also includes a shared commitment to the preservation of the creation.

Many EMS member churches are situated in regions that are regularly hit by climate-related natural disasters, especially in Asia. In India, for example, heavy monsoon rains repeatedly wreak havoc, and droughts and extreme weather regularly result in crop failures. The Church of South India (CSI) is so far the only church on the subcontinent that has integrated the issue of environmental protection in its constitution and in its mission statement, stressing that Christians have the moral duty to preserve God's creation. The welfare of humanity and the environment and the efficient functioning of the economy ultimately depend on the responsible handling of the planet's natural resources. Christian ethics can contribute significantly to a sustainable lifestyle.

„If we want a better future for our children and grandchildren, we must act now.“

„We are at a critical moment in history,“ says Prof. Dr Matthew Koshy Punnackadu, who is director of the CSI's Ecological Concerns Department. „The clock for climate protection is ticking. Temperatures are rising. Storms are raging. Crops are failing. And if we don't seize this opportunity, every single one of us will be affected.

The church has a role to play in working with government for net zero emissions. If we want a better future for our children and grandchildren, we must act now.“

12 POINT PLAN FOR PRESERVING THE CREATION

Since 1992, the CSI has been focusing on several environmental protection programmes and projects. In 2018, it approved „A Guideline of 12 Points for the CSI Dioceses to develop Green Congregations“ (Green Protocol for Green Discipleship). All congregations were called upon to implement the strategy paper. It provides background information and practical methods for new projects and new ways for greater sustainability. „We believe that the Church should respond when people exploit natural resources and thereby crucify God's creation, flora and fauna. The CSI expresses its solidarity with the whole creation that has been groaning in labour pains until now, longing for redemption,“ the twelve-point plan says, quoting Romans 8:22.

With almost four million members in 24 church dioceses and 15,000 parishes today, the CSI is not only the largest Protestant church in India, but also one of the largest in the whole of Asia. Its catchment area includes the five southernmost Indian states of Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. Besides numerous hospitals and several theological colleges, the church also runs many kindergartens and schools. At these schools, the CSI has been promoting a climate-friendly, ecologically responsible lifestyle since 2015 with the „Green School“ programme. In the coming years, all schools will be gradually organised around the principles of sustainability and transformed into „Green Schools“. By 2022, every second school should already be equipped with climate-friendly water treatment and solar



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The effects of global climate change are already clearly noticeable in India today. People in rural areas are affected the most.

systems. In order to achieve this goal, the CSI works closely with school administrations on site and offers teachers special training and further education.

MAKING ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION A PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

At the CSI schools, the subject of climate change is taught through interdisciplinary and action-oriented learning. In this way, pupils learn to think in interrelationships and to develop creative solutions for dealing with climate change. Girls and boys first jointly develop a climate-friendly environmental management system for their schools. They explore what possibilities there are to save water and electricity, recycle waste or keep the air clean. The results of their surveys are precisely documented by the children and young people. In addition, the children, young people and teachers also pass on their knowledge to their families and church parishes.

Moses Packiaraj, who teaches botany at the CSI Girls’ Higher Secondary School in Pasumalai, is Green School Programme Coordinator in the Madurai-Ramnad diocese and is one of the 1,270 educational multipliers of the programme for sustainable ecological education. Together with the children and young adults at “his” school, he develops extremely practical ways to save energy and water, utilise rainwater and



In the „Green School“ programme, pupils learn about the organic cultivation of various vegetables, here cabbage for example.

avoid waste. Producing “seed balls” is one of the ideas for making green farming popular in schools and villages and among families. The small balls made of dung and mud unleash their strength during the next rainy season when they sprout small neem or fruit trees.

**Donate now!
Support the Church of South India in their efforts to organise climate-friendly and sustainable schools.**

Fundraising Team

EMS REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES 2021

Donations, offerings	2,628,356.61
Contributions from members	4,106,081.00
Project refunds and subsidies	163,881.04
Interest, dividends	83,059.06
Revenues on assets	21,810.00
Rental revenues	97,321.00
Refunds and other revenues	128,567.81
Reversal of accruals	7,200.00
Withdrawal from free reserves	-
Annual surplus	1,483.19

7,237,759.71

Project allocations	3,174,121.00
Allocations to reserves	649,058.26
Staff costs, administration	681,045.92
Staff costs, programmes	1,685,128.96
Staff costs, ecumenical co-workers	180,603.52
Write-offs	46,212.67
Material costs, administration	487,210.52
Material costs, programmes	334,378.86

7,237,759.71

EMS Corona Relief
(June 2020 up to February 2022):

500,000.00

All figures in Euro.

CONTINUED FINANCIAL STABILITY

Solidarity is especially called for in times of crisis. After five years of rising revenues, we are delighted that in the second Corona year we also managed to keep collections and donations at about the same level as in the previous year.

The fact that in times of tight budgets, the contributions of EMS members also remained stable at the level of 2020 – especially in the five German regional churches – is a clear sign that global solidarity is functioning. There were minor changes, for example, in revenues from assets due to the generally low level of interest rates. As a result, these fell by just under €20,000. However, this was offset by an increase in revenues from estates from the Evangelical Association of Schneller Schools (EVS). All in all, revenues remained stable.

HALF A MILLION EURO FOR CORONA RELIEF

We are particularly grateful for the generous coronavirus funds that we were able to raise through our network. The international member churches and associations of the EMS as well as many private donors contributed a total of €500,000 between June 2020 and February 2022 to fight the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic. The challenges posed by Covid-19 varied considerably between member churches: While some supplied food to the most vulnerable in their communities, others had to ensure that children whose homes and school facilities were temporarily closed could continue their schooling online or in their home villages. Funds were also urgently needed to pay for the salaries of pastors and teachers. At the same time, specific help was provided in the form of Covid-19 tests, personal protective equipment and hygiene training.

Another focus was on the prevention of domestic violence, which increased sharply worldwide during the Covid-19 crisis. In addition to cramped living conditions, fears about the future and financial worries in particular often lead to quarrels, aggression or outbreaks of violence.

For example, the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG), the Church of South India (CSI), the Evangelical Christian Church in Halmahera (GMIH) and the Basel Mission – German Branch (BMDZ) implemented various projects for the protection of women through the EMS Corona Relief. On behalf of all the recipients, we sincerely thank all those who contributed.

On behalf of all the recipients, we sincerely thank all those who contributed.

A look at the expenditure side shows that the administration's material costs of €487,211 increased by about 20 per cent compared to the previous year. This was due to higher expenses for the energetic refurbishment of the EMS Secretariat in Stuttgart, conversion to a modern IT infrastructure and unscheduled costs relating to Covid-19 prevention. In view of an uncertain future, it is important for the EMS to strengthen its own reserves which we were able to increase by almost €650,000 thanks to good earnings in 2021.

Rudolf Bausch
Executive Secretary



A LOOK AT SUSTAINABILITY GOALS

The Evangelical Mission in Solidarity wants to align its work even more closely to the aspects of sustainability and organisational environmental protection. The certified management system „EMASplus“ will be introduced for this purpose.



„EMASplus“ has already been applied successfully for many years in many German church organisations. Therefore, it was only natural for the EMS to also consider using it when it was looking for a system to implement its sustainability goals. The abbreviation EMAS stands for „eco-management and auditing scheme“. The „plus“ stands for the additional inclusion of social and economic components.

Sustainability management via EMASplus helps the EMS to systematically evaluate and continuously improve its own impacts. To reduce the carbon footprint, for example, a start has already been made on the energetic refurbishment of the Secretariat's premises in Stuttgart. Meetings and international gatherings are increasingly being replaced by video conferences. This saves air miles and as a result many tons of greenhouse gases. However, social considerations are also part of the sustainability concept at the EMS, which are to be reflected in gender-sensitive budget planning and appointments to committees and management positions as well as socio-ecological financial investments. A standardised sustainability report will ensure transparency of information and thus contribute to the credibility of our efforts towards justice, peace and the preservation of creation.

Rudolf Bausch
Executive Secretary



MALAYSIA: CHURCH DEVELOPMENT AID IN SABAH

The Basel Christian Church of Malaysia (BCCM) is creating new sources of income for marginalised population groups in the state of Sabah. It is engaged in a number of different fields.

More than ten years ago, the BCCM began to plant oil palms on 30 hectares of land. The proceeds from the plantation mainly helped to pay salaries for pastors, maintain church buildings and finance other services of the church. Today, the BCCM is also aware of the ecological damage caused by palm oil plantations and is switching to other types of plants such as coffee.

Pig farming for poor families is also on the church's agenda. Many indigenous people want to take part in this promising programme. Church workers teach them how to keep pigs so that they thrive. This includes adequate stalls, caring for the animals and marketing them. The church has been trying out this model for a year and learning from their experiences. Twelve families have already participated successfully. A full-time pastor has been hired to continue the successes of the community development project.

The BCCM also organises seminars on breeding stingless bees. It is researching whether this kind of farming is worthwhile for the indigenous population in Sabah. Even Bishop James Leong Wong has set up a small experimental farm for stingless bees next to his house and passes on his own experience of beekeeping to others.

In addition, the BCCM maintains a 10-acre plot called the „Basel Garden“. Besides using this land for horticultural purposes, it also serves as a training centre. A second church-owned piece of land of seven acres is in Kudat, a town close to many rural church communities, and is called the „Basel Farm“. It is meant to be a signal of hope and assurance that there will be no more poor congregations if everyone is willing to learn and work hard.

Meanwhile, church leaders are aware of the importance of economic empowerment for rural communities through „helping people to help themselves“. Therefore, this subject is now also taught at the Sabah Theological Seminary.

*Sabine Eigel
BMDZ editor*



„INTEGRITY“ OF CREATION?

What is the relationship between humanity and the creation as understood by the Bible? To answer this question, it is worth looking at other cultures and religions, says theologian and Japan expert Martin Repp:

„Some Christians worldwide do not seem to have understood that destroying nature for profit is a sin against God the Creator. Churches oppose this with the slogan ‘Integrity of Creation’. But does this express an appropriate relationship of human beings to the creation? Is this not a paternalistic expression underpinned by the same ‚being master over nature‘ as in the exploitation of nature?

While I was working in Japan, I encountered a different paradigm to describe the relationship to nature, which also opened my eyes to something similar in Christianity. Nature grows very luxuriantly here, so people must constantly defend themselves vehemently against the forest and its animals invading their fields and gardens. Due to this overpowering ‚subject‘ of nature, Japanese religiously regard phenomena like trees and rivers

as ‚deities‘, they show them respect and make offerings in gratitude. They treat them as subjects of their own kind with whom one must ‚communicate‘ in a cultivated manner. For example, when a Catholic priest in a village in the Japanese Alps had to cut down some trees, he first asked them for their permission.

In the early Christian monastic tradition, among the Desert Fathers and the Irish-Scottish monks, there is a similar relationship with nature. They created gardens that ‚represented‘ the original paradise, in other words, they made it possible to experience it through the senses. They also communicated with wild animals and thus lived in peace with them. The missionary Saint Boniface, on the one hand, chopped down the pagan tree of the gods in Fritzlar (Germany) because of the power struggle between the Roman Catholic Church and the Germanic tribes. Disibod, on the other hand, who came from Ireland without any claim to political power, stuck his pilgrim’s stick into the ground, which took root and grew into a tree; he saw himself as sent only by Christ to ‚reconcile‘ with creation. Knowledge of both paradigms could serve us as a guide today on how to communicate correctly with nature – on an equal basis!“

*Dr Martin Repp
Member of the DOAM Executive
Committee and ecumenical co-worker
in Japan from 1988 to 2005*



LEBANON: SETTING SIGNS OF HOPE

The news we received from Mathilde Sabbagh at the end of January shocked us. „The Islamic State is back and is only ten minutes away from our house. But at least fourteen people managed to come to worship today.“

Mathilde is a pastor in Hasakeh, East Syria, and is closely connected to the Evangelical Association for the Schneller Schools (EVS) through the theological studies programme in Beirut, Lebanon. She was unable to leave the house for a fortnight with her small children; in the end, everything was in short supply. When the fighting was over and people returned to daylight, there were around 500 dead in the streets. And yet the church services always took place – because what would still have an effect in such a situation, if not prayer?

On 11 February – his 65th birthday – Rev. George Haddad, director of the Johann Ludwig Schneller School (JLSS) in Lebanon, stood in freezing rain and snow flurries to repair a small generator together with members of his staff. The fuel oil tank was empty, and no fuel had been available on the market for several days – a consequence of the economic

collapse in Lebanon. So they had tapped some diesel from the tanks of school buses and tractors to at least heat a little with this mini-generator. But now, of all times, the unit did not work. Nevertheless, they managed to get it running again by the evening!

These two examples may show how devastating the situation has become in large parts of the Middle East. And yet there are signs everywhere that people are not giving up but want to stay in their villages and work for peace there. At the Theodor Schneller School in Jordan, the JLSS and the Moadieh Old People’s Home in Lebanon, solar panels are now producing electricity or at least hot water – thanks to donations from the EVS, the international EMS Fellowship and several Rotary Clubs. And Christians everywhere are praying for their brothers and sisters in the Middle East. May God protect them in these times!

*Dr Uwe Gräbe
EVS Executive Secretary*



On the occasion of its 50th anniversary, the EMS invited young representatives from its member churches to a theological conference in Ghana. The focus was on important issues for the future such as peace, justice and the integrity of creation. David William Daniels took part in the meeting on behalf of the Moravian Church in South Africa.

Many young people are united in their concern about the destruction of our environment. As a Christian, how do you deal with this issue personally?

Most Christians believe that God gave us the role of “dominion” over creation, but there is a misunderstanding of our role in this regard. We were and are given a special responsibility within creation to cultivate it, guard it and use it wisely. This responsibility is called stewardship. Therefore, I personally feel as a young Christian, it first starts with me being a responsible believer who looks after God’s creation as a whole and not just in the interest of humanity. If we don’t look after the environmental element of the “life circle”, we are causing harm to our planet Earth. That’s why, after I understood my responsibilities as a steward of God’s environment, I believe I have a duty to educate my fellow Sisters and Brothers about their responsibilities. We cannot go and talk about the environment if we don’t know the effects or any facts about it.

What role does the theme of „integrity of creation“ play in the South African context? In what ways are people there confronted with it?

The topic has become a talking point in societies and organisations. However, it has not translated into radical changes in behaviours or organisations taking bold decisions to change their ways. There have been small steps in the right direction, for example cutting down on the amount of paper we are using for printing purposes by making more use of digital communication to share information or documents. In my country, we are currently faced with two national crises: the lack of water and electricity. These two crises are teaching us how to save on our resources, but they have also allowed engineers or inventors to be more creative in bringing in products that are eco-friendly and cost-saving.

What do you see is the churches’ responsibility in the face of climate change and the destruction of the environment?

As churches, we cannot be silent on climate change and environmental destruction or say it does not affect us. The natural disasters and extreme weather that have occurred all over the world over the past years are a “wake-up” call for us. I fear we need to fasten our seatbelts because we cannot continue exploiting God’s creation for our own benefit and not think that there will be no consequences for

our actions. We as churches need to speak out more on climate change and environmental degradation. Scripture tells us that we have a moral duty to care for all of creation: When one part of the body suffers, we all suffer. God's covenant applies not only to us humans, but to all living things.

“We need a new global culture of solidarity.”

Is there something you would like to say to church leaders in the EMS?

I call on all church leaders to not just “tick” the box saying that we discussed this topic in our Church organisations, but that we have taken action on the reports or resolutions and this should lead to members changing their attitude towards God's whole creation. We are not the creatures of “dominion” over Nature but the stewards of God's creation. We are entrusted to responsibly care for harmony and development within the entire creation. We need a new global culture of solidarity. Here, „Mission in Solidarity“ is needed more than ever before. We do not have much time left. Now is the time to act!

Integrity of creation is only one of many urgent problems facing humanity. What about the issues of peace, justice and solidarity?

They all are interlinked. Suppose we take no action now as a community of faith or do not raise a prophetic voice regarding the integrity of creation. If that is the case, we cannot expect peace, justice and solidarity in our societies or countries. If we don't look after the creation, how can we

expect peace because we will be fighting for food since it will then be the survival of the fittest?

If we don't look after the creation, how can we expect justice because there will be no fairness or equality since it will then be the survival of the fittest? If we don't look after the creation, how can we expect solidarity because it will be everyone for themselves, since it will then be the survival of the fittest?

Those are harsh words...

I know I'm on the extreme side, but for many people it is already reality. Therefore, we have to take action on this challenge as believers and not say the following: „It's not my responsibility or it doesn't affect me“. We are commanded to live in peace with our neighbour, act justly and serve in love.

Interview conducted by: Stefan Schaal



David William Daniels, member of the Moravian Church in South Africa, President of the church's youth organisation, and Youth Representative on the EMS Mission Council since June 2021.

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TOGETHER WE ARE FREE

It's time to make a difference,
to strive for liberty.

To understand that saying "I"
is not as strong as "We".

So, let us share our visions,
the blessing from above,
let us be ambassadors of love.

So many different cultures,
and I am different too,
but a common longing
will change our point of view.
So, let us share our future,
and let our hope increase,
let us be ambassadors of peace.

Refrain: **Together we are free.**
Together – you and me.
Together we can show the world
what heaven will be.
If we love each other,
respect our dignity.
In Jesus' name:
Together we are free.

EMS Jubilee Song by Fabian Vogt



50 years of EMS!

**Celebrate with us on 18 September – online or in many
congregations of the EMS member churches.**

Videos, text, sheet music, playback versions and trombone choir

sheet music in A-flat major and G-flat major for the Jubilee Song are available at

www.ems-online.org/song

