

EMSINSIGHTS

1/2026



HOPE

MAIN FEATURE

Ambassadors of Hope

SMALL STEPS, BIG RESULTS

How Anna, who is deaf, is changing lives

LIVING DIALOGUE

Four voices on Interreligious Learning

WHEN HOPE SENDS RIPPLES AROUND THE WORLD

Marking Jürgen Moltmann's 100th birthday



Evangelical Mission
in Solidarity



DEAR READERS,

Perhaps the best way to approach this issue is from back to front. At the very end, you will find a quote by Dietrich Bonhoeffer: “Hope remains.” And indeed, it does. We look at the present through the lens of hope for the future. Hope does not arise from the way things are today, but from the way they are ultimately meant to be.

The bible verse I chose for my confirmation was Hebrews 11:1: “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” When I chose this bible verse for my confirmation at the age of 15, I was still a long way from studying theology and spending my life in the church. Looking back, I would say, the confirmation verse chose me rather than the other way round. This verse has accompanied me throughout my life and has been a source of strength, especially in difficult times. This is because I know, in the end, God has the final say. That is why I place my hope in God even today.

And I am not alone in this. You will find many stories of hope in this issue. It is not just about hope for oneself, but also about giving hope to others. “Trusting in what we hope for” unites us in the EMS, and this living trust in God makes the people in the EMS ambassadors of hope – for others! So that you too may discover that “Hope remains”.

Rev. Dr Dieter Heidtmann
General Secretary



Together we care about the integrity
of creation.
We are EMAS^{plus} certified.

Cover: “Beacon of hope” at the
13th Conference on World Mis-
sion and Evangelism in Arusha,
Tanzania.

Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS)

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MAIN FEATURE

AMBASSADORS OF HOPE

Christian hope is not a vague utopia, but grows from faith in Jesus Christ. It encourages us to play an active part in shaping the world and make God’s love visible.

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42-year-old Anna Riana Arief teaches children and teenagers who are deaf like herself.

SMALL STEPS, BIG RESULTS

HOW ANNA, WHO IS DEAF, IS CHANGING LIVES

Far from the headlines, there are stories of people who do not begin by asking, “What can go wrong?” but instead wonder, “What can grow?” Perhaps this is where hope truly begins: in careful attention to small details, in a focus on steps that may seem insignificant yet quietly open the door to an entirely new future.

One such story of hope unfolds in the Toraja highlands of northern Indonesia. In the town of Rantepao, Anna Riana Arief, who is deaf, works at the special education centre of the Toraja Church. At her school, children with disabilities are not merely taught; they are encouraged, empowered, and lovingly accompanied as they take their first small – sometimes hesitant – steps forward. The emphasis is on education and self-confidence, on skills and dignity. A child proudly signs his name with his own hands for the first time. A young girl discovers the joy of reading independently. A boy suddenly realises, I can do something – people see me.

When forty-two-year-old Anna enters the classroom each morning, the children respond instantly. Hands fly up, faces light up, and the room fills with laughter, conversation, and learning. Here, the focus is not on deficits, but on possibilities.

A SAFE PLACE

Anna lost her hearing when she was about one year old. “It wasn’t until I got older that I realised I was different from the other children,” she says. Things that many people take for granted – a conversation, a shout, a casual remark – became a problem for her. “Sometimes I felt lonely. But I learnt to cope with it,” she says.

When forty-two-year-old, she joined the church’s training centre. “That was the first time I felt truly understood. I could learn to express myself without feeling ashamed. For me, it was a safe place.”

A safe place is more than a building. It is an experience. I am taken seriously. I am supported. I am not overlooked. For Anna, this place became a turning point – step by step.

WHEN SUPPORT CREATES A RIPPLE EFFECT

Today, Anna works at the centre herself. Her career path shows just what is possible through long-term, sustainable support. A child who needed support has grown into a woman who empowers others.

“I wanted to pass on what I had received myself,” she says. She started out as an assistant, later working as a carer and teacher. For her, it was a natural progression. She knew what the children were going through from her own experience. She knew where they felt insecure and where they needed support.

“I wanted to pass on what I had received myself.”

“It gives me a deep sense of joy to see the children grow in confidence,” she says. This progress happens in small, often quiet steps. “When they begin to use sign language in front of others – something they once didn’t dare to do – it makes me especially happy.”

Here, hope shows itself in the form of a gradual process. With patient support. As a trust that grows. “Without communication, there is no self-confidence,” Anna points out. “Sign language is the key to everything.” Language opens the

door to participation. It means being able to express wishes, ask questions, stand up for oneself and dream. Anna often speaks of “my children” and explains, “I am by their side every single day. I see their fears, their progress, and their joy. Sometimes it feels as though they were my own children.”

PARTICIPATION BUILDS SELF-CONFIDENCE

The children at the centre dream of living an independent life. They want to work, make their own products, or open a small shop. To pursue this path, the children need training, guidance, and reliable support – often for a period of several years.

“For many, the path to an independent life is not an easy one,” Anna says candidly. “There is often a lack of financial resources or support. But I remind the children of everything they can do – and of the strengths they already have.”

“I would love to go on an outing with the children one day,” says Anna, smiling. “Just go out together, laugh and make memories.”

This may sound like just a simple line, but it is socially significant. That is because participation starts with self-confidence. And self-confidence grows whenever people believe

in the potential that lies in each person to achieve more than circumstances would suggest.

The staff at the training centre do not just teach “their children” – they advise, support, and encourage them. They involve the parents, develop new perspectives, and discover abilities. This shows repeatedly just how important even small, practical things are – such as learning materials or joint activities. But often there is a lack of time and money to do this. “I would love to go on an outing with the children one day,” says Anna, smiling. “Just go out together, laugh and make memories.” Wishes like these go to show that hope is not something abstract. It is something real, part of everyday life and it brings people together.

TOGETHER WE CAN CHANGE PEOPLE’S LIVES

What is happening in Rantepao is not an isolated case. It reflects a deep commitment on the part of society. Churches, local staff, international partners, and supporters – they all play a part in turning chance opportunities into sustainable paths in life. No-one can change the world on their own. But together, they are changing the lives of individual people.

Perhaps that is precisely the alternative narrative we need today – not one grand solution, but many small, reliable contributions. Many places where people stand up for one





In class, deaf teenagers learn how to make small, handcrafted items.

another. Many stories that show that hope is possible. “I have seen for myself just how support can change a person’s life,” says Anna. “Today, I am able to pass that on.” And she adds, “Without the people behind this work, my journey would not have been possible.”

Her story is representative of many others. Of children who find their place. Families who have regained their confidence. Communities that take responsibility.

Far away from headline news, that’s where quiet miracles take place. They are not flashy. They do not shout out for attention. But they transform lives – and, little by little, our world too.

Anyone who listens to Anna comes across these stories. Hope lies in the courage to let such stories move us. And to become part of these many small steps which, together, achieve more than first glance would suggest.

Thorsten Krüger

GIVING THE GIFT OF HOPE. SHAPING THE FUTURE.

- 31 €** helps to provide a personalised therapy and exercise programme for one child
- 250 €** contributes to a celebration, such as Easter or Christmas
- 525 €** allow 21 children to receive complete handicraft training

LIVING DIALOGUE

FOUR VOICES ON INTERRELIGIOUS LEARNING

In a world that is both interconnected and polarized, interreligious dialogue has become more than an academic discipline – it is a lived practice essential for peaceful coexistence.

Through a six-month Interreligious Studies Program at the Henry Martyn Institute (HMI) in Hyderabad, India, the Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS) fosters this kind of transformative learning. Four participants – Putri Adelia Datu Manaek Sampebua (Indonesia), Rev. Joseph Charles Kwaatei Quartey (Ghana), Liviwe Masizole Ndabambi (South Africa), and Edward Daniel Simamora (Indonesia) – share how the program shaped their understanding of faith, identity, and community.

UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN FAITHS IS VITAL

For each participant, the decision to join the program developed from personal conviction and curiosity.

Putri, raised in Indonesia’s vast religious diversity, explains:

“I want to learn to understand, not merely to know, and I want to engage other religions dialogically and constructively.”

For Joseph, who was already active in ecumenical and inter-faith work in Ghana, the course promised a broader horizon: “I believed the course would help me appreciate other religions, especially outside my country. Understanding between faiths is vital for global peace.”

Liviwe entered the program driven by a theological calling: “If our witness is to be valid, it should bring about peace and reconciliation. We cannot be a divided Church in a divided society.”

Edward, a researcher and academic editor, aimed to expand his academic and theological framework: “My primary motivation was to deepen my understanding of interreligious dialogue beyond the Indonesian context, especially through South Asian perspectives. HMI’s blend of thorough study and lived engagement offered exactly that.”

LIVING AND STUDYING IN INDIA

India’s diversity – religious, cultural and linguistic – became a learning experience in itself.

Joseph was struck by how dialogue was woven into daily life: “People from different faiths study, live, work, dine together and respect one another – not just as a program but as a lifestyle.”

For Liviwe, entering others’ sacred spaces strengthened his understanding of hospitality:

“Being a good guest means leaving your comfort zone and being respectful while grounded in your faith.”

Putri experienced transformation not only through lectures but through shared humanity: “Simple moments – sharing meals, family stories, conversations after class – taught me the true meaning of dialogue.”



On 12 February 2026, (from left) Joseph Charles Kwaatei Quartey (Ghana), Putri Adelia Datu Manaek Sampebua (Indonesia), and Liviwe Masizole Ndabambi (South Africa) received their certificates for successfully completing the Interreligious Studies Program at HMI before setting off for internships in India.



Edward Daniel Simamora (l.) and Putri Adelia Datu Manaek Sampebua (r.) giving presentations during the Interreligious Studies Program at HMI.

Edward was moved by India’s internal diversity – linguistic, cultural, religious – which challenged his assumptions of a monolithic “Asian” identity. Discovering that Jesus has a respected place within Islamic theology became a particularly profound learning moment for him.

INTERRELIGIOUS REALITIES DIFFER

The participants’ countries of origin shape their perspectives. Putri reflects that diversity requires “maturity in faith, openness, and a commitment to peace.” In Indonesia, she sees plurality as an inseparable part of cultural and social life.

Joseph describes Ghana as a country where religious groups coexist naturally – celebrating festivals together and navigating differences with generally peaceful coexistence.

For Liviwe, diversity is rooted in shared humanity: “Our identity should be that we are all human beings, living together with kindness and humility.”

Edward introduces a more critical perspective. He emphasizes the importance of taking power relations and historical experiences seriously. He describes an understanding of human dignity that exists only “if I can see your suffering as my own.” For him, coexistence goes beyond tolerance – it is radical solidarity: “I don’t want to go to the light at the end of the tunnel if it means leaving my fellow human beings behind.”

BRIDGEBUILDING IN CHURCHES

All four participants see the program as essential preparation for leadership and community engagement.

Liviwe believes it strengthens his responsibility as a future church leader: “Theology must move beyond the classroom and be visible in the lived experiences of the general public.”

Putri hopes to embody reconciliation in her ministry: “I am encouraged to become a bridge that embodies interfaith cooperation.”

Joseph feels renewed confidence as he continues his work in Ghana: “The program has helped me break prejudice and fear. This will help me relate freely with people of other faiths in my country.”

Edward emphasizes that his perspective on conflict has changed: Reconciliation can sometimes come before justice he discovered. He hopes to integrate these insights into his research and church ministry and to help build bridges in Indonesia.

A PROGRAM TO BE RECOMMENDED

All four participants wholeheartedly recommend the Interreligious Study Program at HMI. Joseph affirms: “HMI is the best place for anyone interested in interfaith study.” Putri adds: “This program enriches academic insight and cultivates social sensitivity and spiritual depth.” Liviwe highlights its safe and transformative space: “It deepens your faith while empowering you to seek understanding and inclusivity.” Edward emphasizes the close integration of theory and practice as a unique learning opportunity.

Across continents, cultures, and languages, their stories converge on a shared insight: Interreligious engagement is not merely intellectual – it is relational, humble, transformative, and urgently needed in today’s world.

Astrid Weyermüller

Information about the Studies Program:

<https://ems-online.org/en/get-involved>



WHEN HOPE SENDS RIPPLES AROUND THE WORLD

MARKING JÜRGEN MOLTSMANN'S 100TH BIRTHDAY

When the Tübingen theologian Jürgen Moltmann published his “Theology of Hope” in 1964, he could not have imagined that this book would have such a profound impact. The World Council of Churches’ Commission on Faith and Order, of which Moltmann was a member, helped the book find its way into the Black civil rights movement in the USA, liberation theology in Latin America, Minjung theology in Korea, Kairos theology in South Africa and even Orthodox theology in Eastern Europe.



*The Protestant theologian
Jürgen Moltmann (1926–2024).*

Hope is rooted in Moltmann’s thoughts on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, but above all on the prospect of Christ’s return: “Without the awareness of Christ through faith, hope becomes a utopia reaching into thin air. Without hope, however, faith decays, becomes feeble and ultimately a dead faith. ... That is why faith, wherever it unfolds into hope, does not make one calm but restless, not patient but impatient.”

Yet the “Theology of Hope” was a response to Jürgen Moltmann’s own questions about life. In his final lecture, he told his students, “I wanted to study physics and mathematics: Max Planck, Niels Bohr, Einstein, and Louis de Broglie were my heroes. Then, by some miracle and with great difficulty, I survived the inferno that destroyed my home city of Hamburg in July 1943 during the British RAF’s ‘Operation Gomorrah’; 40,000 dead in a single night, and my friend Gerhard Schopper torn apart by a bomb right beside me. That night, for the first time, I cried out to God: ‘Where is God?’ and ‘Why am I not dead too?’ Questions that have stayed with me to this day.”

CRY OF AN OPPRESSED PEOPLE

When Jürgen Moltmann visited Korea in 1975, he found himself caught up in the conflict between “the unparalleled missionary zeal of the Christians on the one hand, and on

the other, the emerging dictatorship of President Park, who was suppressing democratic rights and freedoms". The South Korean secret service placed him under surveillance: "rectors and professors, pastors and students were questioned and interrogated about me, sometimes for hours on end, either by telephone or directly by agents." The Korean "Minjung theology" embraced the "Theology of Hope" to apply it to Christian resistance against the military dictatorship. The Korean Christians linked Moltmann's notion of a God who suffers with humanity in the suffering of Christ to the cry of the oppressed people (Minjung). In Minjung theology, Jesus Christ is not a distant God but is present in the pain of the oppressed. This vulnerable God is the source of hope for humanity.

RESISTANCE AGAINST APARTHEID

In South Africa, the "Theology of Hope" became an important theological foundation for the struggle against apartheid. The "Kairos" document, drafted by South African theologians from Soweto in 1984, stated: "Nothing could be more relevant and more necessary in this moment of crisis in South Africa than the Christian message of hope. Jesus has taught us to speak of this hope as the coming of God's Kingdom. We believe that God is at work in our world turning hopeless and evil situations to good so that his 'Kingdom may come' and his 'Will may be done on earth as it is in heaven.' We believe that goodness and justice and love will triumph in the end and that tyranny and oppression cannot last forever. One day 'all tears will be wiped away' (Rev 7:17; 21:4) and 'the lamb will lie down with the lion' (Is 11:6). ... Most of the oppressed people in South Africa today and especially the youth do have hope. They are acting courageously and fearlessly because they have a sure hope that liberation will come. Often enough their bodies are broken but nothing can now break their spirit. But hope needs to be confirmed. Hope needs to be maintained and strengthened. Hope needs to be spread. The people need to hear it said again and again that God is with them."

KEEPING HOPE ALIVE – EVEN IN TIMES OF CRISIS

In fact, the "Theology of Hope" is compulsory reading for students in many EMS member churches to this day, not only in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, but sometimes in Germany

as well. Together, they continue to spread the Theology of Hope – in their sermons and in the way they practise their faith. When we look at the churches within the international EMS Fellowship, we see that it still takes a great deal of courage in many places, even today: in India in the face of persecution by Hindu nationalism, in the endless conflicts in the Middle East, and even in Germany where the churches do not exactly appear full of hope to the outside world. Moltmann would probably send them on their way with the words, "Be courageous and fearless, for you have a hope that is certain!"

"Christian hope is the hope of God's Kingdom in this life and the hope of resurrection for eternity."

Jürgen Moltmann later dedicated his "Theology of Hope" to those "who, for the sake of hope, have resisted oppression and cowardice in their countries and are suffering in prison as a result. In their devotion lies the true seed of the future." And he stayed committed to the ecumenical movement throughout his life. In an interview he gave to the Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS) in 2022 to mark its 50th Anniversary, he said, "Christian hope is the hope of God's Kingdom in this life and the hope of resurrection for eternity. For a long time, the hope of eternity displaced the historical anticipation of the kingdom of God in the churches. In the modern world, optimistic faith in progress has suppressed the hope of eternity. Both are wrong. The hope of resurrection in overcoming death becomes the motivation for anticipating God's kingdom of peace on earth. We are preparing the way for his coming when we work for a righteous peace between people and with Nature on Earth."

On 4 April this year, Jürgen Moltmann would have turned 100. The EMS took part in a symposium marking his 100th birthday at the Evangelical Academy in Bad Boll on 10 to 12 April.

Dr Dieter Heidtmann

TOGETHER, WE ARE STRONGER

Rev. Andrew J. Odjawa from the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG) is one of three Vice-Presidents of the Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS). “EMS Insights” spoke with him about the hopes he has in his faith, for his church and for the EMS fellowship.



the technology, the money, and all of that. But when you take a closer look, you realize that not all is fine. People are so broken, so hurting, and without hope. Amid plenty there is so much spiritual poverty and pain. And for me the Gospel of Jesus Christ remains the key that can transform lives and communities in such a broken and dark world.

What does EMS mean for you in this context?

Our world needs hope. And EMS helps to give this hope to the world. Christ has saved us, but he has not taken us with him to heaven. He says we should be here on earth. Why? Because he wants us to impact the world and bring his hope to this world – so that the world becomes a better place for everyone. Before we go to heaven, we can already have a taste of heaven here on earth.

Is there a biblical person who embodies hope for you in a unique way?

The Apostle Paul encourages me a lot. He had to go through so many hardships, and amid these difficulties he did not give up. He persisted and continued in the faith. I especially like this verse of Scripture from Philippians 3:14, where Paul says, “I press on toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

The PCG is one of the largest Protestant churches in Ghana. What do you think defines its identity?

We have a strong missionary heritage. Our history began in 1828 with the work of European missionaries from the Basel Mission. All of them died after a short time due to disease and harsh living conditions. But Basel Mission kept sending new missionaries. Because they realized that the only hope for the world is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And that is also what motivates my church to this day. We started as a result

Rev. Odjawa, what is ‘hope’ for you personally – and how does it shape your faith and your ministry in the church?

For me, hope is rooted the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ says he has come that we may have life and have life in abundance (John 10:10). That is what hope is about. This inspires me to reach out in my ministry and to continue to go on even when it is tough and difficult. All too often, our world is without hope. Yes, we have the nice cars, we have

of an ecumenical enterprise; we were born through ecumenism, and we have been shaped by ecumenism.

How does your church address young people?

We have several programmes to empower young people with skills (including leadership skills) and vocational training, so they can be entrepreneurs and create job opportunities for themselves and become channels of hope for their generation. Some of our congregations offer scholarships. We also encourage young people to offer themselves and become ministers when they feel called to full time ministry and there are avenues for them to play active roles in church. Another priority is peace education and peacebuilding. We have established what we call “Peace Clubs” in some of our junior and high schools and communities. Peace is something you often take for granted. But we do not want young people to take it for granted, especially because they are the future. We want them to consciously work at building peace, to seek dialogue and understanding rather than tension and fighting. There cannot be development in circumstances of rage and conflict and when we are destroying ourselves and shedding innocent blood across the world.

While churches in Ghana are growing, churches in Germany are shrinking. What are your observations? What can we learn from you?

The world, including Germany, and the whole of Europe has become so secular. People think that they can do without God. I believe, Europe and churches therein, need a spiritual revival and return to Scripture. Because that is how your nations have been founded, built over the years, the strong structures that we see today. The work ethics and how you have developed has come about and based on God’s infallible word. Africa has become the centre of Christianity now, researchers tell us. We could help support this revival through partnership, dialogue, and shared mission. To bring back the fire and love for God. The same fire that sent the missionaries to Ghana some two hundred years ago.

How can EMS contribute to this?

EMS has a long-standing international experience and a strong global network. It has been in contact constantly with churches in Asia, in Africa, and other parts of the world.

It can not only support these churches in the fight against poverty and injustice, but it can also help the struggling churches in Germany.

How do you see your role as a member of the EMS Presidium?

One of the most important tasks of the Presidium is to strengthen the unity of the EMS fellowship. To be united does not mean we all are going to be thinking the same thing; sometimes we can agree to disagree. But we need to have formal conversations, work together on joint projects or initiatives and if we can do this together, then the prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ comes true, “that they all may be one” (John 17: 21). This is because we are stronger together. Two heads are better than one as an African proverb teaches and confirmed also by scripture (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12). So, when we come together, we can forge stronger alliances and relationships, helping each other to make this world a better place and heaven at last. I am grateful for the opportunity given and may God bless you my beloved!

Interview: Stefan Schaal

Rev. Andrew J. Odjawa, born in 1964, is an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG). He studied theology and psychology at Trinity Theological Seminary in Accra (Ghana) and at the University of Ghana. From 2018 to 2023, he was Presbyterian minister at the Accra Ridge Church, an English-speaking, interdenominational Protestant church, where he also served as coordinating minister (2021-2023). In 2022, he was appointed Director of the Ecumenical and Social Relations Department of the PCG. In 2024, Andrew J. Odjawa was elected Vice-President of EMS.

GOD SEES WHAT IS POSSIBLE

Hope – that is a big word, as big as a shipping container. It is also a word that has become a bit cliché through overuse. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore what it stands for. Therefore, I would like to rephrase it using different words.



In a newspaper interview with the German astrophysicist Harald Lesch, I came across the word “possibilist.” The term is derived from the English phrase “it is possible.” I was intrigued by this buzz word. It has such a positive ring to it and is a modern translation of our biblical word “hope.”

“What possibilities do I have today?” – This sentence sounds a thousand times more positive than “But we will have to think it over again. And this and that problem still needs to be considered.” A possibilist would say, “That may be possible. These are the possibilities I have.” Harald Lesch even goes one better when he says, “Pessimism is a luxury attitude!” Secretly, the thought crossed my mind that “Lesch preaches better about hope than I do as a pastor.”

Sceptics are a very loud group in Germany. Possibilists need to raise their voices to match theirs. This is entirely in keeping with the spirit of Jesus and the biblical tradition where phrases such as “Do not be afraid!”, “Get up and walk!” or “Take heart!” occur like a common thread.

The stories of the Bible are stories of hope. This becomes especially clear in the life of Jesus. His journey led him downward – ever deeper – ultimately to death itself. Yet at the very lowest point, a decisive turning point was reached. Jesus rose from the dead. Life prevailed. New life became possible. This is the courage we need. This is the resilience that, in the

face of overwhelming challenges, dares to proclaim: Change is possible.

Deep down, we humans are waiting for someone to give us courage. Our lives are full of so many things that weigh heavily on our minds and spirits. That is precisely why we can never hear a phrase such as “Take heart! It is all possible!” too often. This is not wishful thinking, nor is it a naive belief in progress. It is as fundamental as a slice of bread which we need to live by. Our God gives us the bread of hope. He is a genuine possibilist.

How and where can we replenish ourselves with this hope? One thing is clear: hope does not simply come to us by itself. We must reach out for it, search for it and open our innermost selves to it. Figuratively speaking, we must tend our ears to the heavens and hear the divine words. “Take heart! Do not be afraid! It is possible!”

*Hope does not simply come to us by itself.
We must reach out for it, search for it and open
our innermost selves to it.*

For me, one way to connect with this life-giving force is through pilgrimage. For several years now, I have regularly accompanied people on pilgrimage weekends. Together we set out on our journey – towards our own stories of hope and towards God. Everyone brings their own personal expectations and motivations. Everyone walks on their own. But still, along the way, something shared emerges – a space in which hope can grow anew.

Rev. Dieter Kern is pastor of the Protestant parish of Michelfeld-Gnadental-Neunkirchen (Württemberg, Germany).

COMMITTED TO A CHILD-FRIENDLY CHURCH

The Moravian Church in South Africa (MCSA) hosted an international EMS conference on the theme of the child-friendly church in Cape Town on 25 October to 3 November 2025.

Nine delegates from various EMS member churches came together to work on the further development and implementation of new guidelines for a child-friendly church. These guidelines combine practical ideas and recommendations for teams and church leaders to organise children's services – the aim being to place children firmly at the heart of church activities. The guidelines are based on the voices, experiences and perspectives of the children themselves.

During the conference, delegates shared their experiences and best practices from their own regional contexts. They

focused on the shared goal of creating safe spaces for children where they can feel included and participate. The conference also provided an opportunity to strengthen relationships between the EMS member churches. A special highlight was the direct exchange with children and young adults from the MCSA, who shared their ideas and what they expected from a child-friendly church.

The conference marked an important step for the global EMS fellowship. It became a place of shared learning, spiritual growth and a renewed commitment to the integral support of children within the life of the church.



The delegates reaffirmed their shared mission to create spaces that are safe, loving and filled with Christian values – places where every child can feel “I belong here.”

Annette Schumm

NEW LOOK FOR THE YOUTH VOLUNTEER BLOG

The EMS Ecumenical Youth Volunteer Programme blog now has a completely new look, sporting a modern design, a fresh logo and a new web address. The blog offers even more vivid insights into the diverse experiences of youth volunteers all over the world.

Thanks to its bilingual format (German and English), the blog is accessible to all participants – for North-South and South-North youth volunteers as well as for other members of the international EMS fellowship. The blog is not only technically impressive, it also looks good. The “mobile first” design ensures

an optimised display on all devices. Multimedia features allow for a varied mix of text, images and videos. Not only that, it directly integrates the Instagram feed of the Youth Volunteer Programme. The blog is designed with barrier-free accessibility, offering people with disabilities unrestricted access to all information and features.

“With the new blog, we are presenting the programme with more international appeal, a modern feel and significantly greater connectivity. It showcases even better what makes our youth volunteer programme so special,” says Melanie

Tews, Head of the Ecumenical Youth Volunteers Programme and Youth Network Unit. The EMS Youth Volunteer Programme offers young people the opportunity to get involved in social and church-based organisations worldwide.

Thorsten Krüger

The launch date for the blog had not yet been finalised at the time of going to press – please visit:

ems-volunteers.org



FAREWELL TO SOLOMON BENJAMIN

On 26 November, the Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS) bid a heartfelt farewell to Rev. Solomon Benjamin, who served as Country Representative for India and East Asia since April 2016 and retired at the end of 2025.



Participants in the Farewell Service for Rev. Solomon Benjamin (center).

impactful one. God shaped my faith to be an enacting diaconal faith.” At EMS, his focus lay on forging ties with and among churches in Korea, Japan, China, and India, as well as fostering intercultural dialogue.

LASTING INITIATIVES

Among his many contributions to the EMS fellowship, several stand out: He initiated a groundbreaking multilateral partnership between the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK) and the Moravian Church in South Africa (MCSA) to support the Elim Home for children with disabilities in

South Africa. He accompanied the process of welcoming the Church of North India (CNI) into the EMS family. He launched an interreligious study programme connecting EMS with the Henry Martyn Institute in Hyderabad, India.

During the service at Paulus Church in Stuttgart, that was attended by numerous guests from near and far, EMS President Rev. Anne Heitmann honoured his years of dedicated service: “You have served the EMS fellowship with remarkable passion and commitment, reaching out especially to those who are often overlooked. We cannot always foresee what will grow from the seeds we plant – much takes root in hidden places. Yet in your years with EMS, you have not only sown generously but also tasted the joy of seeing some of those seeds blossom.”

FAITH SHAPED THROUGH SERVICE

Benjamin closed his sermon with a stirring affirmation of EMS’s mission: to proclaim the Good News and stand with the poor, the marginalized, and those cast aside. “We remain in solidarity with the vulnerable,” he said, “integrating those on the margins into the mainstream of life. Our calling is to transform every curse and form of subjugation into a season of liberation and celebration – so that all may experience life in its fullness.”

Rev. Solomon Benjamin based his farewell sermon on the so-called Nazareth Manifesto of Luke 4:17-20 – a declaration of Jesus’ mission to bring good news, healing, and liberation. Reflecting on the decades of his ministry, he noted: “Every bit of my experience turned my faith into a meaningful and

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MISSION FOR THE POOR AND MARGINALISED

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Astrid Weyermüller

BETTER PROTECTION, MORE TRANSPARENCY

The Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS) is deeply aware of its responsibility to act transparently and ethically. It has therefore adopted two new guidelines designed to strengthen the protection of people and the financial integrity of the fellowship.



The EMS is committed to child protection – because every child deserves a safe environment.

Through its Safeguarding Policy, the EMS adopts a firm zero tolerance approach toward sexual harassment, abuse, exploitation, and discrimination. The policy clearly defines the responsibilities and standards of conduct for all individuals involved in the EMS fellowship, including staff, volunteers, board and committee members, as well as participants and partners engaged in its programmes and projects. A priority of the policy is the protection of children and young people. In this regard, it is fully aligned with the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which sets out comprehensive measures to protect against physical, sexual, and

psychological violence and abuse, and to promote children's wellbeing, social participation, and safety in everyday life.

Numerous passages in the Bible warn against the misuse of money or power for personal gain. Proverbs 15:27 reminds us that "those who hate bribes will live." Corruption, in all its forms, is a global challenge that also affects church development and mission organisations. With the adoption of its new Anti-Corruption Policy, the EMS takes a clear and principled stand against such practices. The Code of Conduct commits the EMS fellowship to rigorously investigate and address cases of lack of transparency, bribery, or embezzlement, irrespective of the gender, position, or background of those involved.

Stefan Schaal

Download the EMS Protection Policy and the Anti-Corruption Policy here:

Safeguarding Policy:

ems-online.org/en/safeguarding



Anti-Corruption Policy:

ems-online.org/en/anticorruption



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BMDZ

CAMEROON: HOPES AND CHALLENGES

Rev. Alfred Moto-poh, Secretary for Education and Partnership at the Basel Mission – German Branch (BMDZ) in Stuttgart, Germany, spent some weeks in his home country of Cameroon. The trip was not only to reunite with his family, but also to carry out pastoral duties within the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC).

During his stay, he attended church services in several different congregations and, among other things, delivered a sermon at Christmas. He also held informal meetings with leaders of the PCC and the Dikome church district to exchange ideas. The Dikome church district has maintained a partnership with the Markgräflerland church district (Protestant Church in Baden, Germany) for over 35 years.

His numerous encounters gave Rev. Moto-poh a first-hand impression of

the current challenges facing the people in Dikome. These include a sharp rise in the cost of living, high youth unemployment and rapid inflation which all place an additional burden on many families. A particularly severe trend is the increasing destruction of arable land – caused by both human intervention and natural factors. The inadequate infrastructure in several communities also makes daily life difficult. People still have limited access to education and reliable healthcare, particularly in rural areas.

Despite these difficult conditions, Rev. Moto-poh found his compatriots to be remarkably resilient. Their resilience and their deep-rooted faith remain unbroken, he emphasised upon his return to Germany. “The visit reminded me of how important community, humility and gratitude are. It also strengthened my sense of responsibility as a pastor to provide spiritual support in the diaspora,” said Rev. Moto-poh.

Stefan Schaal



DOAM

COMBATING EXCLUSION WITH SINTI JAZZ

For the first time, a group of Sinti travelled to Japan at the invitation of the “Buraku Liberation Centre” (BLC). The Sinti jazz trio called “Die Drahtzieher” (literally “The String Pullers”) come from Ravensburg and Madeleine Kehrler is from the “Working Group on Sinti/Roma and Churches in Baden-Württemberg”. The main reason for the trip was to take part in the 16th BLC National Conference which took place in Aomori from 7 to 9 October 2025.

The trip, accompanied by DOAM Chair Carola Hoffmann-Richter and her family, became more than just an official visit – it turned out to be an encounter between people. It quickly became apparent just how similar their experiences are. During the conference, Buraku, Sinti and a former leprosy patient who had faced discrimination, shared their stories, focusing above all on the suffering caused by exclusion.

The fact that the first day of the conference took place in a former leprosy hospital was particularly poignant and showed how much social stigmatisation exacerbates suffering. It follows the same patterns everywhere. It prevents people from accessing education, makes it harder to find housing and work, and attributes traits to people that stem solely from their disadvantaged position. The real wound is the denigration.

This makes solidarity all the more important. The conference highlighted how powerful it is to unite struggles against various forms of discrimination, to create a shared culture that advocates for equality – and to do so beyond national borders. The interludes between the presentations on the history of the Sinti, as well as accounts of their own experiences and their activism, was filled with iconic Sinti jazz music. It created space to breathe, to feel, and to continue reflecting.

The “Drahtzieher” appeared at two other concerts in Tokyo and Kobe, also attracting keen interest. The concerts, organised by Rev. UENO Reina (see photo, with the musicians), Director of the BLC, featured a similar programme that combined information and entertainment.

One member of the “Drahtzieher” summed up his experiences in Japan in the following words: “Perhaps music can help to break down discrimination, not only in the mind but also in the heart.”

Sabine Marschner



NEW LUTHERAN BISHOP INSTALLED

In Jerusalem, the handing over of the reins from Bishop Sani Ibrahim Azar to his successor, Imad Haddad (see photo), marks an important moment for the small Lutheran community in the Holy Land.

On 11 January 2026, Dr Imad Haddad was installed as the new bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) at the Church of the Redeemer in Jerusalem. The service was attended by a large number of ecumenical guests from both the Holy Land and abroad. Dignitaries from churches in Jerusalem, as well as international partners, were also in attendance. Two days earlier, his predecessor, Bishop Sani Ibrahim Azar, had been given a ceremonial farewell service to mark his retirement.

Haddad’s installation took place beneath the large Herrnhut Star in the Church of the Redeemer. The star has hung there ever since the terrorist attacks on Israel on 7 October 2023.

It symbolises hope, peace and God’s

presence. The installation of the bishop was thus also a sign of hope.

Although the ELCJHL is not a member church of the EMS, Bishop Haddad is connected to the EMS and the Evangelical Association for the Schneller Schools (EVS) in many ways. Among other things, he sits on the boards of directors of the Near East School of Theology (NEST) and the Theodor Schneller School (TSS) in Jordan. Christians form a small minority in the Palestinian territories including East Jerusalem. The ELCJHL is one of the few local Arabic-speaking Protestant churches. The ELCJHL runs schools with a total of 2,000 students in Bethlehem and several other towns.

Dr Uwe Gräbe

HOPE REMAINS



Without hope, faith is sick. It is akin to a hungry child who refuses to eat, or like a weary person who refuses to sleep. As surely as a person believes, so surely does he hope. And there is no shame in hoping, in hoping without limit.

Who would even speak of God without hope? Who would even speak of God without hoping to see him one day? Who would speak of peace and love amongst people without wishing to experience them for all eternity?

Who would speak of a new world and a new humanity without hoping to share in it one day? And why should we be ashamed of our hope? It is not of our hope that we shall one day be ashamed, but of our pitiful and fearful hopelessness, which trusts nothing in God, which, in false humility, does not reach out

where God's promises are given, which is resigned in this life and cannot rejoice in God's eternal power and glory. The more a person dares to hope, the greater he becomes with his hope: A person grows with his hope – provided it is hope in God and His power alone. Hope remains.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer