

EMS INSIGHTS

1/2025

MAIN FEATURE:

Between worlds.
Home and foreign lands.

JESUS ON THE PARK BENCH

Homelessness in India

CALLED TO OVERCOME BARRIERS

Interview with Dr Stephen Lakkis

COMPASSION AND HUMANITY

Healthcare work in Ghana and South Africa



Evangelical Mission
in Solidarity



BETWEEN WORLDS

When we hear the word “home”, we usually think of the place where we grew up or where we live now and of the people who make us feel safe and at ease. We also tend to derive our identity from our origins, which quite often sets us apart from others. At the school I attended, it was important which village you came from – instead of the neighbouring villages, with which relationships were not always friendly.

Home is “something which shines into the childhood of all and in which no one has yet been,” writes Ernst Bloch, the philosopher. This completely turns our understanding of home upside down. It is not where we come from that determines our identity, but where we want to go. This understanding of home is very biblical: “For here we have no lasting city, but we are looking for the city that is to come,” it says in the Epistle to the Hebrews (Hebr. 13:14). It is not what we are now that defines us but what we will be one day. “In my Father’s house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?” said Jesus (John 14:2). That is our true home: We will one day be citizens of the Kingdom of God, and that already determines who we are and to whom we belong. Then there will be no more “strangers” but only a sense of belonging together in Jesus Christ.

In a world where it is often no longer clear what or whom we can rely on, the feeling of home is quickly lost. It is good to know that even now, in this world, we can trust in our true home. Whatever happens, we belong to the kingdom of God. That is home.

Best regards,

Rev. Dr Dieter Heidtmann
General Secretary



*Together we care about the integrity
of creation.
We are EMASPLUS certified.*

*Cover: Homeless man on the
street in Chennai, South India.*

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Passers-by walking past without noticing: poverty and homelessness make people invisible.

MAIN FEATURE

BETWEEN WORLDS. HOME AND FOREIGN LANDS.

Where do we find a home in times of geopolitical upheaval? What gives us stability and security in this world? In this issue, people share their personal thoughts on what home means to them and also what it means to feel like a stranger or foreigner.

JESUS ON THE PARK BENCH

Homelessness in India.

Pages 4-8

LEAVING TO STAY ALIVE

The Waldensians in Germany.

Page 9

CALLED TO OVERCOME BARRIERS

Interview with Dr Stephen Lakkis.

Pages 10-12

HOME WITHOUT POSSESSIONS

Thoughts about an ambivalent feeling.

Pages 12-13

JUST A FEW BOLTS MISSING

Home planet Earth: Eco-theological reflection from India.

Page 14

STRONG NETWORKS

Instagram, Emso, women's network and the Quifd quality seal.

Pages 15-16

COMPASSION AND HUMANITY

Healthcare work in Ghana and South Africa.

Pages 17-19

EMS NEWS

Project work and the new Presidium.

Pages 20-21

ASSOCIATION NEWS

News about the BMDZ, DOAM and EVS.

Pages 22-23

OUTLOOK

Indian song: the Homeless Jesus.

Page 24

“Foxes have holes,
and birds of the air have nests;
but the Son of Man has nowhere
to lay his head.”

Luke 9:58



JESUS ON THE PARK BENCH

HOMELESSNESS IN INDIA

“Where should we go?” It was more than just a question. It was a paralysing fear that overwhelmed the family that had just lost their father and breadwinner. He was only 58 when he died, defeated by the relentless forces of poverty.

As he was a few hundred rupees short of the money needed to pay the doctor, the man decided against seeking treatment for his illness. He was willing to take this path so as not to jeopardise his family’s future. Yet his children dared to take him to the “expensive” hospital – without any money or any support from their relatives. Only with their faith in God. But in the end, the children were forced to abandon their idea and bring their father home to die.

A devout Christian, the father had been employed as a janitor at a church for 40 years. This is how he earned his living. Even so, just three days after his death, the family was asked by the church to leave the janitor’s apartment on the church

grounds without further notice. The door to their former home was literally slammed shut in their faces. And now the three young girls, their brother and their distraught mother were crying. They asked God, “Where should we go?”

The door to their former home was literally slammed shut in their faces.

The feeling of suddenly becoming homeless, ending up on the street, having no money, no one to hug and nowhere to go is a feeling that cannot be compared to anything else. It raises fundamental existential questions: where will the next



About 18 million children live on the streets in India.



“Homeless Jesus”-sculpture in Chennai, South India.

THE HOMELESS JESUS

The internationally renowned bronze sculpture, the “Homeless Jesus” (French: “Jésus le sans-abri”), was created by Canadian sculptor Timothy P. Schmalz. The statue depicts Jesus as a homeless person sleeping on a park bench, wrapped in a blanket, and the wounds on his feet reveal his identity. The sculpture is more than two metres long but there is still enough room for someone to sit on the bronze bench. Schmalz created the original in 2012/13 and there are now over 100 casts worldwide, including those in Capernaum, the Vatican, New York City and also in Chennai in South India – in front of the chapel dedicated to the Apostle Thomas who was killed there.

The socio-economic reality which is referred to by the “Homeless Jesus” often goes unnoticed.

Many people walk up to the sculpture as is the custom in the Christian tradition of devotion with depictions of Jesus. They touch his feet, kiss them, pray or meditate in front of him. However, the socio-economic reality which is referred to by the “Homeless Jesus” often goes unnoticed. The crucial factor here is not the sculpture itself as an object of devout contemplation, but the reality that lies behind it. In Luke 9:58, Jesus speaks of the reality of his own life, of having no roof over his head and being homeless: “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” I often hear sermons that romanticise this verse by interpreting Jesus’ homelessness either as part of God’s plan or by romanticising it as a sign of his deep spirituality. But however one interprets this Bible passage theologically, it would be dangerous and inhumane to interpret it as a requirement of faith for marginalised groups such as women, widows, indigenous peoples, the poor and the Dalits.

What Jesus is talking about here is something completely different. By choosing to be homeless, he sides with those who are disregarded by the existing socio-economic world order. Above all, it is an indictment of a world that offers no home to the poor and oppressed. Not having a roof over one’s head is indeed a denial of the basic right to housing, peace

meal come from, what about safety, health, social identity and where does one belong?

The man I am talking about here was my own father. This experience, which I had as a young girl, not only brought me face to face with the harsh reality of homelessness, but also made me aware of issues of social justice – all that at an early age. But there’s more. My personal life experiences led me to a deeper understanding of the life of Jesus. The Gospel of Luke recounts that Jesus described his social situation as “homeless” (Luke 9:58, cf. Matthew 8:20). This caught my attention – also because of the need to question this often-romanticised aspect of theology.



Marginalised: rubbish collector in Chennai, South India.

and protection for the body and soul. What Jesus raises here quite loudly is not something that can be spiritualised or theologised, but a question of justice in the Kingdom of God.

A QUESTION OF JUSTICE

Following the example of Jesus, Christian communities have always engaged in charitable activities. But it seems that the aspect of justice is often neglected. As Christians, we should not only focus on short-term relief from material or emotional hardships, but also question the social reality of homelessness and poverty. Why do people become homeless? Whose interests does this serve? How can those affected overcome this situation permanently? In our world, a person's value is all too often measured by their economic success and social relationships. Finding oneself at the bottom of this hierarchy has a serious impact on self-esteem and self-perception. It robs those affected of any perspective,

makes them resign themselves to their fate and forces them into the role of victims. Any discussion about homelessness, therefore, is always linked to the question of social responsibility and the prevailing power dynamics.

Why do people become homeless? Whose interests does this serve?

Wherever we find homeless people in our society, they are people whose economy of work, of their bodies, their energy, their creativity, their gender, their beliefs, their dreams, their knowledge, their rights and their property has been stolen or abused by the existing systems of exploitation. So the question of justice becomes the yardstick for understanding all aspects of homelessness in our time – and even for understanding the kingdom of God.



Jesus always sides with the disadvantaged and marginalised.

This means that any society that cares about homeless people needs to move away from a purely caritative understanding of charity – such as distributing food, blankets and a bit of money – and work towards social transformation that has everything to do with socio-economic justice. In fact, the question of homelessness needs to be rethought from the ground up. It is no longer a question of “Where should I go?” but “Who has stolen my resources and my labour?”

Prof. Dr Vethakani Vedhanayagam from the Church of South India (CSI) is deputy theological advisor to the EMS.

HOMELESSNESS IN INDIA

Today, India is the fifth largest economy in the world. At the same time, millions of Indians are afflicted by extreme poverty. The gap between rich and poor is gradually growing wider. The coronavirus pandemic and its consequences slowed down any progress towards reducing poverty.

With around 1.4 billion citizens, India is not only the most populous country in the world, but also has the highest number of homeless people globally. This number includes about 18 million children. Those affected are usually marginalised in many different ways. They are largely ignored and often disregarded by society due to their homelessness or because of their low or non-existent caste status. According to estimates, a quarter of all homeless people in India suffer from mental illness.

Homelessness is partly a direct consequence of families migrating from rural areas to large cities. Other causes include old age, illness and disability, a lack of affordable housing and unemployment. Girls and unmarried or widowed women are particularly at risk of becoming homeless in India’s male-dominated society.

To protect girls and boys from homelessness, the EMS supports several children’s homes run by the Church of South India (CSI). Many of the children housed there are orphans. Others come from broken family backgrounds. They find a temporary home at the CSI facilities where they receive schooling, medical care and psychological counselling. Special emphasis is placed on empowering girls.

LEAVING TO STAY ALIVE

THE WALDENSIANS IN GERMANY

There are always situations where people have to leave their old homes and find new ones. Of course, there are many reasons for this. The Waldensians, a persecuted Protestant minority in Italy, were forced to leave their mountain villages in Piedmont because they could no longer live there in safety and in peace. The rulers gave them the choice of renouncing their faith, dying or going into exile.

So in 1699, a group of Waldensians decided to head north. In order to stay Protestant and survive, they found a new home, settling in what was then the Duchy of Württemberg, and founded towns such as Kleinvillars, Grossvillars, Perouse, Pinache, Palmbach (now in Baden) and Nordhausen. At first, they remained a religious community separate from the Protestant churches of Württemberg and Baden, but they eventually became part of them. Over the course of time, they were gradually integrated and assimilated into German society. Today, the communities are proud of their very special past and they consider it important to preserve their heritage. This is why the German Waldensian Association and a beautiful Waldensian museum in Ötisheim-Schönenberg were created in the house that served as the rectory for Henri Arnaud, leader of the first Waldensians.

For me personally, there were other reasons for leaving my old home after growing up in Karlsruhe and studying Protestant theology. I wanted to spend some years serving in the Waldensian Church, partly because I was now married to an Italian Waldensian. I found the challenges facing this small but socially relevant church an exciting prospect, and I wanted to support it with what I had learned.

So I lived in Italy with my husband, and later with our two sons, for more than 20 years, working as a pastor in various congregations. And I was very happy to discover every year at the synod in Torre Pellice that the Waldensian Church (which had always been very short of financial resources for centuries) was supported by the Italian cultural tax 'Otto per mille'

(English: '8 per thousand') to support other organisations in their social, cultural and ecological projects. Right from the start, the Waldensian Church decided not to use tax money for church purposes, but only for social and cultural projects, including those outside its own church.

Today, 50% of these funds are channelled to international projects. More than ten years ago, the Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS) reached an agreement with the Waldensian church leadership that some of its projects, e.g. in Indonesia, India, South Africa and Ghana, would receive approximately €300,000 per year in subsidies. This agreement came about because the Waldensians turned to the Protestant churches of Baden and Württemberg in their search for an organisation that was involved in overseas projects, knew its way around them and could guarantee monitoring and evaluation. With the support of the Waldensians, the EMS can now help to ensure that fewer people are forced to leave their homes, even if they actually want to stay, e.g. through projects that foster conflict resolution and dialogue.

Dorothee Mack



CALLED TO OVERCOME BARRIERS

INTERVIEW WITH DR STEPHEN LAKKIS

Dr Stephen Lakkis has been pastor at the Christuskirche (Christ's Church) in Pforzheim (Protestant Church in Baden) since September 2022. Before that, he worked for many years as professor of theology at various institutions specialising in public theology. He has worked with NGOs, universities, church groups, museums and ministries (including the German Federal Foreign Office) as a consultant on social issues such as economic justice, human rights, democratisation, environmental policy and peace-building.

**Rev. Lakkis, what does 'home' mean to you?
Where do you feel at home?**

As a foreigner, I am constantly asked where I came from. That is not so easy to answer. My family is Lebanese, but during the war we fled to Australia. While I still feel connected to Lebanon, it was never my home. I grew up in Australia, but as a migrant I was never allowed to feel at home there. Australia still struggles with racism, and it was made clear to us daily that we weren't welcome there. So my wife and I left Australia and have spent 30 years living in many countries, most recently Taiwan. Most of all I feel at home when I'm with my wife. I'm happy wherever we are, so long as we're together.

**How has this experience shaped you,
both personally and professionally?**

It's painful not having a place of one's own. But it can also be liberating. Germany is still learning how to build and deal with pluralistic societies, so labels or ideas such as the Milieu theory still play a big role in this pre-pluralistic stage. People want to know which single box they can put others in, often without understanding how diverse a person's identity can be. Migrants especially exist in multiple groups simultaneously. I belong simultaneously among professors and refugees, am now a pastor of the united Protestant Church of Baden but have spent my life serving ecumenically, I swap between four languages and can find a place at almost

any table. Today we speak about cultural code-switching, jumping between different groups. The Apostle Paul would simply say: I have become all things to all people.

Nationalism and xenophobia are currently on the rise worldwide. What does the Christian faith have to counter a policy of 'us vs them'?

One day during Religious Education in my German school I had to teach a prescribed unit called "Muslims among us." It was shocking to find this thinking represented in the teaching materials. Minorities are not among us, they are us! We build this society together. There has never been a homogenous Us or pure society. Precisely this type of thinking leads to hate of others and the desire for ethnic cleansing – or remigration as people in Germany are calling it. But all people together create the Us of our society. We will never overcome xenophobia if we don't learn that.

That is also true for our world. Nations are a recent invention which artificially divide people. And nationalism claims that we are connected with people on this side of the border, but not with those beyond it; that we are responsible for people on this side of the border, but not others. But the Christian faith stresses our connection with all people and our responsibility for all people. God is the Father of all and Christ died for all. That's why the Christian faith is universal, connecting people from all the world's countries and cultures.



Nationalism claims that different people can't exist together. But the church is living proof that pluralism really works.

"Nationalism wrongly claims that national borders can limit our ethical responsibility to our fellow human beings."

Christians are therefore called to overcome barriers. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, the victim is robbed and left naked. Without clothes, all the markers of his identity are gone; we don't know to which ethnic, religious or social group he belongs. He exists simply as a person in need – and only the Samaritan perceives him as such. In contrast, nationalism wrongly claims that national borders can limit our ethical responsibility to our fellow human beings.

At the EMS General Assembly 2024 in Freiburg, you held the key note speech on the topic of 'Public

Theology'. Is standing up for 'strangers' part of public theology?

Unlike other faiths that concentrate on inner religious experiences, the Christian faith is directed outwards. As Jesus stresses, the love of our neighbours is what defines us as Christians. And as the Good Samaritan shows us, love of our neighbours must also include love of strangers. (Without our artificially created borders, the concept of foreigner loses all meaning anyway.) That's why the Bible repeatedly stresses God's demand for the care and protection of strangers. Christ sums it up simply: Those who don't welcome the stranger also don't welcome God.

How can the church provide a safe home for those who have no home? What does that look like? What does it mean?

Most importantly, we need to stop destroying other people's homes, forcing them to leave their homelands. Those who do then come to us need the freedom to find a new home

here. Some argue that foreigners are lazy, even though it's a political decision to prevent them from working. And when the German departments for Foreign Affairs refuse to issue appointments or take 6–12 months to process documents, they are actively making life here impossible. We also need to fight for local people in need, who are often ignored by their own country. The church can apply its influence in all these areas to fight for social change.

Finally, the church can also act, not just through church social services but also e.g. by offering sanctuary, as my church has been doing. Nobody claims that the German state is managing things perfectly. Asylum is therefore a service to the state. When human rights or even people's lives are at risk, the church grants asylum to avert serious damage to life and to the reputation of the state.

How can an organisation like the EMS contribute to this?

Many churches around the world often have more experience with these problems than we do. In our partnerships we can learn from each other. Importantly, we can't manage change alone. The ecumenical church of Jesus Christ exists purposefully as structured solidarity, bound with church members locally and worldwide. Only together can we improve life for all, until this world finally becomes a home for everyone.

The interview was conducted by: Stefan Schaal

HOME WITHOUT POSSESSIONS

THOUGHTS ON AN AMBIVALENT FEELING

I am an Armenian born in Aleppo, Syria. My grandparents were expelled from their homeland and most of my relatives have emigrated to the United States. Since I was a child, I have been haunted by two totally different feelings.

On the one hand, I loved the place where I once lived. Aleppo, with its friendly people, its neighbourhood, the small shops, the streets that were still full of people even late at night, and the public park with its fountains and ponds that always gave me a feeling of tranquillity. On the other hand, I felt like a stranger, as if I had been forced to flee and leave everything behind. However, there is some truth to this ambivalent feeling. It is when we can let go that we come

closest to our most original and authentic selves. So, when we are willing to give things up, to relinquish the human potential to become whole – or to be truly at home – that is when we receive the attention we deserve. The question of home is therefore essentially the question of the self in its relationship to something that transcends everything. It has little to do with possessions but much more with the human quest for wholeness, for something that people always seek

but never fully achieve. So is home where you let go of all ties, like Abraham, who had to leave his tent to look at the stars and hear the voice of God?

I then moved to Beirut in Lebanon to study theology. There, I had everything I needed. The “Near East School of Theology” (NEST), where I studied, was my home, and the sea was not far away. What more could I ask for? I loved Beirut, and it seems to me that I loved Beirut more than Aleppo, perhaps because of the sea, because of the wide, open horizon that allowed a person’s life to blossom. After all, the sea makes people think about what lies beyond the visible horizon. Here, another meaning of home comes into play. We humans are at home in that mystery we call God which lies beyond every horizon. Home can therefore be found by opening one’s self to what is in fact openness and open in itself, that which surrounds us on all sides.

“We humans are at home in that mystery we call God which lies beyond every horizon.”

I then travelled to Heidelberg, Germany, to do further theological research. While walking through the city, I observed people’s faces and came to the realisation that all people are basically similar, even if they tick differently depending on their location, time and culture. Nevertheless, I became aware of another difference. In one place, people’s lives are protected; in another, they seem worthless, as if everything was permitted there, everything allowed. This led me to a further understanding of home. Home can result from people reaching out to others, accepting them and making space for them because it is only by encountering others that people step out of themselves and into the open, where home is. You could also say that caring for others is part of our journey towards wholeness; making sure that everyone has a home.

A human being is a human being wherever he or she is; a tree is a tree wherever it grows; and the flowing River Neckar in Heidelberg reminded me of the water fountains of Aleppo and the waves of the Mediterranean. So I came to the conclusion that for a home to be my home, I need a tree, a river



and people, but even this all too familiar, ambivalent feeling of being at home and yet still being a guest, always ready to leave.

*Dr Sylvie Avakian
is Pastor of the Protestant church congregation
in Stuttgart-Heslach, Germany.*

JUST A FEW BOLTS MISSING

It was a sunny morning. The airport was bustling with passengers rushing to and fro, announcements blaring over the loudspeaker and, in the background, the roar of jet engines. I walked across the tarmac towards the plane that was to take me to my destination.

Then something unusual caught my eye. Right next to the wing of the plane, I saw a man standing on a tall ladder.

He was wearing a uniform with the airline's logo on it. He was carefully removing bolts from the wing of the plane and putting them into a cloth bag. Alarmed, I ran over to him and asked, "What are you doing?"

The man looked down at me and smiled, "I work for the airline. They've found out we can earn 100 rupees for every bolt we sell. It's part of a new revenue strategy."

I stared at him in disbelief. "But won't that damage the plane's wing?" I asked. He waved his hand, "Oh, don't worry. The manufacturers have made these wings strong enough to cope with a few missing bolts. It's not the first time I've done this. Nothing has ever happened. The plane flies perfectly. Besides, the airline needs money for development projects, and I get a commission of 50 rupees for each bolt. So it's a win-win situation!"

I blinked, not knowing whether to laugh, cry or call security. "Are you mad?" My voice trembled. The man chuckled. "Calm down. I know what I'm doing. And besides, I'm on

the same flight as you. That should reassure you that everything will be fine!"

Admittedly, this story is made up. It did not happen that way, but it's true nonetheless. Actually, this has nothing to do with a plane. It's all about our home planet, Earth. We are all passengers on this blue-green aeroplane hurtling through space. And yet there are people – politicians, bureaucrats, business magnates, property developers – who are taking bolts out of this plane every day.

It's not about metal bolts, but the bolts of life – the precious elements that hold the Earth together: Forests are being chopped down for short-term profit. Rivers are being poisoned in the name of progress. Species are being silently wiped out, their habitats destroyed. Every species lost, every tree felled, every ecosystem destroyed is like a bolt in the wing of this great aircraft.

Biological diversity is not an optional extra – it's a necessity. Just as every bolt on a plane has a purpose, every living thing on this planet plays a role in maintaining the ecological balance. If too many bolts are removed, disaster is not only possible, it is inevitable.

And unlike in the story above, we cannot change airlines. There is no alternative route. We are all in this together. It is time we stopped those who are greedily and carelessly removing the bolts. It is time for us to stand up, raise our voices and protect the biodiversity that sustains all life. Not just for Earth, but for ourselves, our children and all living beings who are on this journey with us.

*Prof. Dr Mathew Koshy Punnackadu
is Director of the Department of Ecological
Concerns of the Church of South India (CSI).*



EMS NOW NETWORKING ON INSTAGRAM

The Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS) has expanded its social media presence and is also on Instagram now. The new account will share posts on development projects, educational initiatives and peace-building directly to its feed and will include news from the church, mission and theology.

With Instagram, the EMS Fellowship is making its work even more transparent and is promoting exchange within its international network. The popular social media platform offers the perfect forum to network people across continents and support intercultural dialogue. At the same time, it provides direct access to inspiring stories and projects from around the world.

Discover the challenges and successes of EMS member churches worldwide – from growing algae in Indonesia to “Peacemakers” in Ghana, vividly recounted in short videos, photo

galleries and inspiring everyday stories. Take a look at the ecumenical volunteer work of the EMS and discover how child-friendly churches are taking shape in various parts of the world. Personal accounts show what solidarity looks like in practice – authentic, mainly in English and always smartphone-friendly.

Anyone who is interested in justice, peace and global partnership within a church context is invited to subscribe to the account [instagram.com/missionin-solidarity](https://www.instagram.com/missionin-solidarity) and participate in the discussion. Be a part of the community and



support the EMS to build a fairer world together – one swipe at a time!

Carolyn Spies



EMSO AT THE KIRCHENTAG

Emso, mascot of the EMS children's programme, was also a big hit as a walk-act at the German Protestant Kirchentag (Church Congress) in Hanover.

YOU & ME: FRIENDS AROUND THE WORLD is an EMS educational programme for children in children's services and in primary school. The mascots Emso the Elephant and Pipit the little sparrow accompany children on their journey of learning all over the world. At the 39th German Protestant Kirchentag, however, Emso had to appear without his friend Pipit. But he



wasn't alone for long. As you can see here, he met lots of friends in Hanover.

Dr Dieter Heidtmann

ems-online.org/en/get-involved/childrens-programme



EMS WOMEN'S NETWORK: OPENING UP NEW PERSPECTIVES

What strategies, resources or activities have a positive impact on the empowerment of women in the community or the church? Where would women like to see more efforts made to implement and accelerate such measures? The EMS Women's Network asked its members these questions on the occasion of International Women's Day on 8 March 2025. The responses were very encouraging.



Theologian Finarsi Lumentut reports on her teaching at the Christian University in Tomohon (Indonesia): "We have integrated feminist theology into our curriculum with the aim of empowering women and men to interpret the Holy Scriptures from a gender-equitable viewpoint. By examining biblical figures such as Rebecca, students learn to critically question patriarchal narratives. At the same time, it is crucial for us not to distort the theological integrity and original message of the biblical text and to preserve its meaning. This kind of approach brings new perspectives to church work and can have a positive impact on various areas of church life."

Members of the international women's network have repeatedly called for women to have greater representation in church leadership. They said that it needed more effort than has been made so far to break down the systemic barriers and prejudices that

women face both inside and outside the church. It was also emphasised how important it is for churches to listen to what EMS Presidium member Junita called "their stories". One of the strategies that has a positive effect on the empowerment of women, says Junita, is the exchange of personal stories with biographical references – especially in Bible study. "These stories often reveal the deep spiritual connection that women have with themselves, their bodies, their wombs, their pain and their joy in relation to God. Every woman's journey is unique and sometimes painful, but always meaningful."

Jasmine Alley of the Church of South India (CSI) reinforced the importance of listening without judgement: "This is a first step in helping women feel comfortable talking about their needs so that the Church can respond and continue its mission as a house of God, a home for all God's people."

Eleanor McCormick

EYVP: QUALITY SEAL AWARDED

In recognition for its outstanding work, the Ecumenical Youth Volunteer Programme (EYVP) has been awarded the Quifd seal for the fifth time in a row. The new seal is valid until July 2027 and confirms compliance with precisely defined quality standards in voluntary service.

For the first time, the South-North programme was also included in the certification appraisal. Two assessors visited the EMS Secretariat in Stuttgart at the beginning of October 2024 to discuss developments in the Ecumenical Youth Volunteer Programme. Interviews were also conducted with former volunteers. A German volunteer reported on her work at the Asian Rural Institute in Japan, and a South African volunteer talked about her voluntary service at the Schillerstrasse Family Centre in Heilbronn, Germany.

Both meetings went very well and gave the assessors an authentic insight into the volunteer assignments. Eleanor McCormick, Head of Programmes and Networks and also in charge of the EYVP, praised her team for the time and energy they had invested in applying for the Quifd seal.

Melanie Tews



COMPASSION AND HUMANITY

EMS HEALTHCARE WORK IN GHANA AND SOUTH AFRICA

The Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS) is committed to providing medical care for people in need in Ghana and for fighting AIDS in South Africa – especially in these increasingly difficult times.

The current global situation is one of growing uncertainty and economic crisis. There is a dwindling political will to take international action to help people in need. Solidarity, if it exists at all, is often confined to national borders. Many countries are cutting their development cooperation budgets. For example, the new US administration has decided to completely dismantle USAID, its aid organisation. This has catastrophic consequences for many people in Africa who are

infected with HIV or suffering from AIDS. Up to now, USAID has ensured that those affected have access to life-saving drugs in many countries.

Enormous progress has been made worldwide in the fight against AIDS in recent decades. All this is now in jeopardy. In South Africa, for example, there is great uncertainty about the future care of the 5.9 million infected currently



The “Masangane” programme supplies HIV-positive people with antiretroviral medication.



Women in a hospital waiting area in Ghana.



Doctor working at the Presbyterian Hospital in Agogo, Ghana.

receiving antiretroviral therapy. “Without international aid, the number of new HIV infections could more than sextuple to 8.7 million by 2029. The number of AIDS deaths is likely to increase tenfold to 6.3 million,” fears Winnie Byanyima, Executive Director of the UN organisation UNAIDS.

SOUTH AFRICA: HELP WITH OPEN ARMS

“Masangane” means “to embrace”. And that is exactly what the Moravian Church in South Africa (MCSA) is doing with its aid programme of the same name: it cares for people who otherwise have no one to turn to. People with HIV or AIDS – including many young mothers, young adults and children. There are one million AIDS orphans and more than seven million people living with HIV in South Africa. They face stigmatisation, poverty and a lack of prospects every day. But Masangane is fighting back – with open arms.

The programme provides an all-round package of support for those affected: HIV testing and antiretroviral drugs, counselling, pastoral care, financial assistance, educational opportunities and help to help themselves. It creates safe spaces where people can rebuild their dignity and self-esteem. Spaces where fear can turn into trust – and marginalisation into participation. For many young people in particular, Masangane is a real turning point – a step to return to working life, with access to medication and the feeling of no longer being alone.

GHANA: “POOR AND SICK FUND”

For many families in Ghana, serious illness means not only great suffering but also a financial risk. Medication is expensive, the nearest health centre is often far away – and with no money, the doors to the clinic remain closed. Health insurance is unaffordable for many poor people in Ghana. This often leads to serious illness or death that could have been prevented if it had been treated in good time.

The Presbyterian Church in Ghana (PCG), a member of the EMS for many years, is fighting against this injustice. It reaches thousands of children and adults every year with its five district hospitals, dozens of health centres and two nursing schools. One particularly important initiative is the Poor and Sick Fund, a church aid fund that covers treatment costs for people without health insurance. “These institutions are fully on the side of the poor and disadvantaged,” says Dr Theresa Rettig, a paediatrician at the Presbyterian Hospital in Agogo. Her commitment is to those who would otherwise have no chance because good health is not a given here.

LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

Access to medical care is a human rights issue. When political interests replace compassion and charity, everyone must show solidarity. The EMS Fellowship is ready to take on this challenge. But they cannot do it alone. Programmes such as the Poor and Sick Fund in Ghana or the Masangane

programme in South Africa can only be kept going if they receive outside financial support.

Saving lives begins with a decision. The decision not to look away, but to say: "I will not leave anyone behind." The people of Ghana and South Africa have placed their trust in us that this is not an empty promise. We are aware of our responsibility and will do everything we can to fill the gap together. Whether you donate €20, €50 or €100, every donation is a sign of hope. Every donation helps to make the world a little warmer and more humane.

Fundraising Team

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Ghana: Health Care

South Africa: Masangane



ems-online.org/en/support/south-africa-masangane



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EMS PROJECT WORK: STRONGER TOGETHER

The Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS) is again investing more than 3 million euros in joint projects to improve the living conditions of many people around the world.

The international community of EMS members has again approved a funding amount of EUR 3.04 million for the 2025 and 2026 funding period. This is the same amount as in previous years. The funds will go to projects for which individual EMS members were able to apply for in 2023 and which the EMS Mission Council approved in 2024. Around half of the funds will be used for education and training. Just over a third (37%) will be used for diaconal projects, including poverty reduction. Ten percent will be invested in projects for justice, peace and the integrity of creation, and seven percent in projects to spread the Gospel. A total of 47 projects will be funded. Ten percent of the funds will be used for additional small projects.

Sustainability is a top priority in many projects: In the coastal region of Labakkang (Indonesia), the “Algae Against Poverty” project is teaching farmers how to use the sea to cultivate algae. The raw material of the future is a renewable

resource, binds large amounts of CO₂ and can be used in a variety of ways: from superfoods to bioplastics. “By cultivating algae, the project participants not only improve their income situation, but also contribute to the preservation of creation and social coexistence. Because of its interreligious nature the project brings Muslims and Christians together through learning and working,” says Christine Grötzinger, who coordinates the international projects at the EMS office in Stuttgart.

With the support of the EMS community, the Church of North India (CNI) is setting up a healthcare network in villages in the Punjab region bordering Pakistan. The CNI has been a full member of the EMS for around two years and is now participating in the EMS project funding programme for the very first time.

And in South Africa, a country with high youth unemployment, the Moravian Church in South Africa (MCSA), a member of the EMS, is setting up a nationwide youth ministry. The aim is to ensure that all young people in the country have reliable points of contact to help them with challenges related to work, health and identity.

The project work improves the living conditions of many people around the world. This is possible because, on the one hand, donors support the work of the EMS and, on the other hand, the members of the EMS work together as partners. They listen to each other. They help each other and combine their commitment to work together for peace, solidarity and good living conditions for as many people as possible. They share a common conviction: Together we are stronger than we are alone.

Benjamin Helmschrott



Outpatient healthcare service provided by the Church of North India (CNI).

EMS ELECTS NEW PRESIDIUM

The Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS) elected a new Presidium at its General Assembly in Freiburg, Germany. The delegates also voted on groundbreaking amendments to the EMS constitution.

Rev. Anne Heitmann was unanimously elected as the new chair at the meeting. The 57-year-old theologian heads the “Ecumenism and Church Worldwide” department of the Protestant Church in Baden (EKIBA). She has been a member of the EMS Mission Council since 2014 and has already served as Deputy Chair of the Presidium for the past two years. The Presidium represents the EMS externally and leads the committees of the international church fellowship.

“At a time when the world is becoming more deeply divided and polarised every day, the EMS is the best place to work together to make a difference. We stand together and we act together for justice and peace. We also listen together to the word of God, which helps us not to lose hope,” says Anne Heitmann. As Chair, she will work to strengthen internationalisation and ensure that the voices of young people and women are given the space they need. Anne Heitmann succeeds Rev. Dr Detlev Knoche who did not stand for re-election due to his pending retirement.

Rev. Markus Jäckle was elected member of the Presidium. He is Senior Church Councillor of the Protestant Church of the Palatinate and heads the Diakonia and Ecumenism department.



Rev. Andrew Jackson Odjawa was also elected member of the Presidium. He is Director for Ecumenism and International Relations at the Presbyterian Church in Ghana. Finally, the delegates elected an additional member of the Presidium, Rev. Junita from the Toraja Church in Indonesia.

This is the first time the EMS Presidium has been comprised of four members instead of three. This was made possible by an amendment to the EMS Constitution which was previously discussed and adopted. The aim of this amendment is to ensure that the composition of the Presidium is a better reflection of the international association. Other amendments to the Constitution adopted by the Presidium aim at ensuring that more women and young EMS members will be represented on committees in future. The General Assembly meets every two years. It is the most important body of the EMS. This is where the content of the community’s work and its long-term strategy are decided.

Benjamin Helmschrott

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BETWEEN CAMEROON AND STUTTGART

Alfred Moto-poh was a parish priest in Cameroon for 17 years. Since last October, he has been living in Ludwigsburg and working in Stuttgart for the Basel Mission – German Branch (BMDZ) as Education and Partnership Secretary.

He misses the community, the connections and the people around him in Cameroon: “Living together brings joy; we support each other in happy times or when someone dies. I miss that close proximity here in Germany.”

The work is also different. He has to be in the office eight hours a day. “In Cameroon, we don’t have a set end to the working day or office hours.” They are on call 24 hours a day. It is difficult to take a holiday. “In practice, you can’t leave the parish alone for two weeks.” Besides, holidays cost money. In Germany, he appreciates that people earn more than at home. This offers many opportunities to support friends and family. “Life here is beautiful and there are nice people.” He suspects that this is probably due to the fact that he is surrounded by Christian people.

Spiritual life here is very different from Cameroon, where church services are long and announcements sometimes last over an hour. “There, the churches are full. I had a congregation of 4,000 people. Sometimes, 2,000 of them would attend a service.” He has the impression that people in Germany think religion is a private matter. Even pastors treat each other differently. “Here, there are pastors who work in the same church and don’t even know each other. That’s strange to me.” What he likes about Germany and would like to see in Cameroon is coexistence between Catholics and Protestants, such as joint choirs. He has already preached in three Catholic churches. In Cameroon, that would be virtually impossible.

Alfred Moto-poh is a widower. In March, he travelled to Cameroon, partly to see his three children who are still at school. As the situation in the country is very unstable, they attend a boarding school in the capital. There is a lot of violence. “We hope that life will get better.” Four young adults, some of whom have completed their studies, are also part of his family. He is concerned about the young generation in Cameroon: “It’s not easy for young people to find a job, so many of them are making their way to Europe.”

Wiltrud Rösch-Metzler



ROOTS AND ECHO

Daniel Cham Jung is pastor and religious educator in the parish of Schwelm in Westphalia. As a second-generation Korean in Germany, his life spans two different worlds.

When I preach today as a pastor in the Protestant Church of Westphalia, my voice sounds not only German, it always carries an echo of my Korean roots. I was born in Castrop-Rauxel in 1984 but my story began much earlier in the churches of Korea. My grandfather was a Methodist minister and my father followed in his footsteps after he came to Germany to work as a miner at the beginning. My mother, who arrived in 1967 as a nurse, found support in the Korean community, as did my father.

So I grew up in two different worlds. The Korean community was like a second family, a home we were lacking as our relatives lived far away in Korea. It was the place where I first grappled with questions that still taunt me today: where do I come from, where do I belong? The German congregations, including the one in

Dortmund-Lütgendortmund where I was confirmed, added another dimension to my identity. They gave me a spiritual home in a language in which I can still express my thoughts with the greatest clarity today.

My personal search finally led me to Korea in 2012, where I took up a foreign vicariate at the National Council of Churches in Korea (KNCC) in Seoul. There I came in contact with the German East Asia Mission (DOAM) and its influential figures such as Lutz Drescher and Paul Schneiss. While the General Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) was being prepared in Busan, I experienced at first-hand how political involvement and Christian faith are closely intermeshed. That was the year when I gained a better understanding of what had shaped my parents, who were active in the democratic movement, and what now shaped me.

Today, I deliberately choose to work in the Protestant Church of Westphalia because I experience a breadth there that suits me. At the same time, I carry within me the intensity of Korean piety, characterised by community, relationships and a living faith. I see it as my mission to combine both traditions – so that dialogue can develop, community can grow and people can inspire each other in their faith.

Daniel Cham Jung



GERMAN PRESIDENT VISITS THE EVS STAND

On Thursday, 1 May, German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier visited the stand of the Evangelical Association for the Schneller Schools (EVS) at the German Protestant Kirchentag (Church Congress) in Hanover.

Mr Steinmeier learned about the work of the Schneller Schools in Lebanon and Jordan and about the peace work of EMS member churches in the region. The National Evangelical Church in Beirut and the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East are now the sponsors for the Schneller Schools in Lebanon and Jordan. The Episcopal Church in Jerusalem is also responsible for the Ahli Arab Hospital in the Gaza Strip, which until Easter was one of the last functioning medical centres in the Gaza Strip.

The German President, who travelled to Israel two weeks later at the invitation of Israeli President Yitzhak Herzog, praised the commitment of Christians in the region to peace and reconciliation. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who has had special ties to the region for many decades, intends to continue advocating for the swiftest possible peace in the Middle East and for the protection of the people.

The 39th German Protestant Kirchentag took place in Hanover from 30 April to 4 May 2025. Its motto was “courageous – strong – resolute”. The congress welcomed over 80,000 people. One of the central themes of the Kirchentag was the defence of democracy.

Dr Dieter Heidtmann

THE HOMELESS JESUS

Song from India

God who came to redeem and save,
Lived with a heart borrowed and brave.

1. The bread and fish that fed the crowd, were borrowed gifts, yet blessed aloud.
The boat He used upon the sea, to preach and heal was borrowed freely.

2. To fulfil the word of prophets old, He rode a donkey, borrowed and bold.
The upper room where He broke the bread, was borrowed, where His love was spread.

3. The cross He bore, the crown of thorns, were borrowed symbols of pain and scorn.
The tomb that held Him, dark and cold, was borrowed, yet could not take hold.

*Translated in English By Prof. Rev. Dr. Tenson Hector
Tamil Professor, Tamil Nadu Theological Seminary*

Original Tamil text by Rev. Prof. Dr CRW. David.

*The late Professor Dr CRW. David was a lecturer in the Department of Communication
at Tamil Nadu Theological Seminary, Arasarady, Madurai.*

இந்தப் புவி மீட்க வந்த பரமனுக்கு
சொந்தம் நம் நெஞ்சமன்றோ

1 பசியுற்ற கூட்டம் புசித்திட ஈந்த
ருசிமிக்க மீன் அப்பம் இரவல்
பெருகிய கூட்டம் நெருங்கிய போது அமர்ந்திட்ட படகுமே இரவல்

2 மறை நிறைவேற எருசலேம் பவனி
புறப்பட்ட கழுதையும் இரவல்.
விருந்தினைக் கூடி அருந்திய போது இருந்த மேலறையுமே இரவல்.

3 அறையுண்ட சிலுவை அணிந்த முள்முடியும் அரசளித்த பரிசும் இரவல்
திரு உடலினையே சுருட்டின துணியும் இடு குழி கல்லறையும் இரவல்