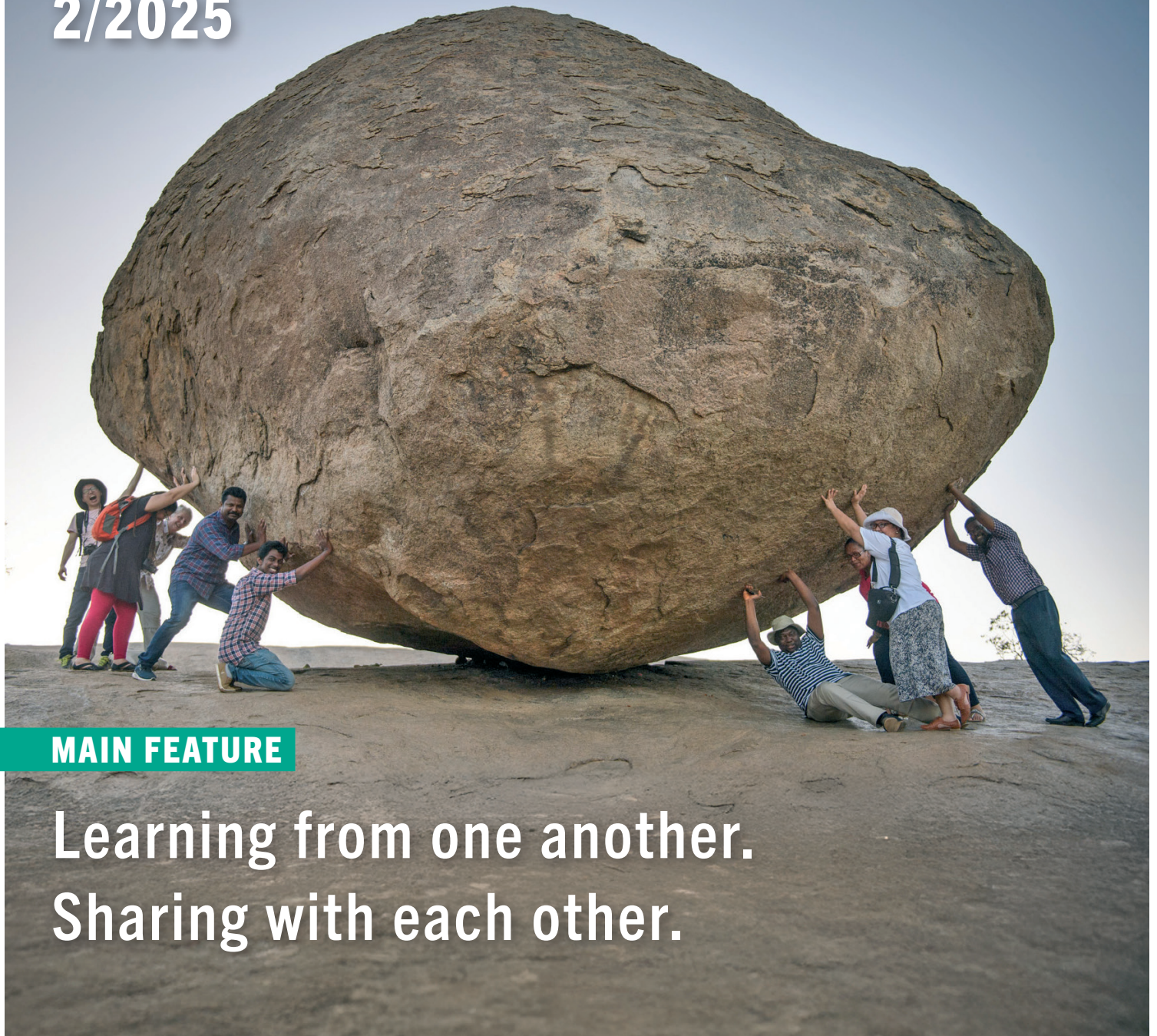


EMSINSIGHTS

2/2025



MAIN FEATURE

Learning from one another.
Sharing with each other.

EMPOWERING AND ENRICHING

Partnerships within the context of EMS churches

PROJECT WORK IN INDONESIA

Working together for a better society

MUSIC THAT GOES STRAIGHT TO THE HEART

Charity concerts featuring Thulile Zama



Evangelical Mission
in Solidarity



DEAR READERS,

Last year, we visited the Moravian Church in South Africa (MCSA). One of the reasons for our visit was partnership work. We conducted talks with partnership committees in many local congregations and districts where we discussed their experiences of working with churches from other countries as well as partnerships between congregations within their own church.

I distinctly remember our visit to the MCSA congregation in New Brighton in Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth). There, our delegation met ten very committed ladies (and one gentleman) from the local partnership committee. The district has had a partnership with the Darmstadt church congregation for many years. The important thing for the women in partnership work was to ensure that the brothers and sisters from partner congregations took an active part in their everyday lives. "When they come to us, they eat what we eat. They sleep where we sleep, even if it's on the floor. They become South Africans and do things the way we do."

I think the women from New Brighton in South Africa perfectly describe what partnership work is all about. Read more about this in this issue of EMS Insights.

Best regards,

Rev. Dr Dieter Heidtmann
General Secretary



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

*Cover: Together we are strong:
co-workers from EMS churches
at Krishna's Butterball in
Mamallapuram, India.*

Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS)

The 25 member churches and 5 mission societies in the EMS form an international association with equal rights. Together they connect about 25 million believers in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Europe.

Donation account: Evangelische Mission in Solidarität (EMS)

Evangelische Bank eG IBAN DE85 5206 0410 0000 0001 24 BIC GENODEF1EK1

Donate online: ems-online.org/en/support

www.ems-online.org/en

www.facebook.com/missioninsolidarity



Living ecumenism: "Feast of the Worldwide Church" in Stuttgart (see page 11).

MAIN FEATURE

LEARNING FROM ONE ANOTHER. SHARING WITH EACH OTHER.

Partnerships at church and congregation level are an intrinsic part of global ecumenism. They demonstrate how Christians can work together in harmony across cultural, geographical and denominational boundaries.

EMPOWERING AND ENRICHING

Partnerships within the context of EMS churches
Pages 4-8

WITNESS TO THE WORLD

Partnerships in mission
Pages 9-10

FAITH THAT BUILDS BRIDGES

Migrant congregations in Stuttgart
Page 11

UNITY IN A FRAGMENTED WORLD

Theological reflection by Reverend Junita
Page 12

STRONG NETWORKS

Women's network, children's programme and youth volunteer service
Pages 13-14

PLANNING AND BEQUEATHING YOUR ESTATE

Request free brochures now!
Page 15

PROJECT WORK IN INDONESIA

Working together for a better society
Pages 16-17

THE YEAR IN FIGURES

The EMS Financial Report 2024
Pages 18-19

EMS NEWS

Charity concerts and Mission Council meeting in Bali
Pages 20-21

ASSOCIATION NEWS

News about the BMDZ, DOAM and EVS
Pages 22-23

OUTLOOK

Send festive greetings and support a good cause
Page 24

Ten Christians from Ghana visited
their Palatinate partner congregations
in September 2024.



EMPOWERING AND ENRICHING

PARTNERSHIPS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF EMS CHURCHES

Mission thrives on personal encounters and reciprocal exchanges. Mission needs ecumenical vision and ecumenical cooperation if it is to consider itself part of God's work in this world. Partnerships at church and congregation level play an important role in this.

A group of participants from Ghana and Germany is wandering through the Palatinate Forest (Germany) in late summer. The group is guided through the biosphere reservation by Simone Kiefer, one of the forest officials working there, and she answers all their questions. Yes, forest fires are gradually becoming a major concern in the Palatinate. Poaching is not really a problem, but the rubbish that many people leave behind in the forest is, along with climate change. At some point, the forester pauses, turns to the group and says, "Tell

me about your forests. I've never been to Ghana!" That evening, Ghanaians and Germans sit together and read the Bible. Someone remarks, "So, this verse here is all about the birds in the sky. But here in the German forest, I hardly saw any birds at all and I hardly see any in the fields either. It's completely different at home. Perhaps people in Germany should think more about the habitat that birds still have and where they find their food."



Finally, on the last day of the visit, Ghanaians and Germans talk about what they would remember the most. The bag of memories quickly fills up – with visits and encounters in the congregations, church services and pictures of old churches. But also with memories of trees in the forest damaged by climate change, an irrigation system in the fields of the Rhine valley and amazement at how much solar power is produced in Germany, even though there seems to be comparatively little sun here.

“Our aim is to experience diversity, to give and receive friendship, because a partnership is all about relationships and togetherness. That’s why we come together to share and support each other.”

Ten Christians from the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG) visited their Protestant partner congregations in the Protestant Church of the Palatinate (EKP) in September 2024. The three-week visit was organised by the Missionary Ecumenical Service (MÖD) of the Protestant Church of the Palatinate and German members of the partnership groups.

Learning from one another – this was repeatedly mentioned

by the group as an important factor in partnerships. And everyone agreed that a visit like this is also about friendships and shared experiences. But regardless of whether they were German or Ghanaian, they all learned a great deal about nature conservation, environmental protection, sustainable agriculture and biodiversity. At the end of the trip, they again contemplated together on how they could put this knowledge and these impressions to practical use in their own congregations and began to develop ideas for confirmation and youth projects or the use of solar energy in their communities.

EXPERIENCING DIVERSITY AND FRIENDSHIP

Learning from one another, sharing new experiences and helping one another: This is repeatedly mentioned in conversations with those involved in partnership work as a key motivation. One committed member from South Africa put it this way: “Our aim is to experience diversity, to give and receive friendship, because a partnership is all about relationships and togetherness. That’s why we come together to share with each other and support one another.”



Forester Simone Kiefer guides the partnership group through the Palatinate Forest.

The international EMS Fellowship has set itself the task of strengthening these relationships between and with one another. The EMS constitution states: “The EMS brings partnerships to life through mutual empowerment and solidarity, learning together, common planning, decisions and actions, and through the sharing of resources, gifts and abilities.”

But how this shared togetherness can be brought to life naturally takes many different forms that are as varied as the individual congregations, districts and member churches. They organise visits and exchanges, share worship liturgies, cultivate personal friendships and support local diaconal projects. Some partnerships have existed for decades, others only for a short time. Some are in regular contact with each other, while with others it is not certain whether the channels still exist at all or have fallen into a deep slumber.

The key question for anyone who wants to maintain or establish new contacts is how Christians from different cultural backgrounds can engage in an equal exchange with one another, and what topics, activities and projects they can focus on.

To achieve an equal exchange and shared learning in an ecumenical context, we need to reflect on whether and how the structures and patterns of stereotypes and power asymmetries between the so-called ‘Global North’ and ‘Global South’ are reflected in the partnerships and how they are addressed.

“This strong sense of solidarity with one another – I think that’s what defines our partnership. We’ve been welcomed with open arms everywhere we’ve been.”

There are an estimated 2,000 to 3,000 international Protestant churches in Germany. Many of these congregations were founded by pastors from West Africa. The Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG) also has numerous foreign congregations located in Germany. These kinds of international congregations could be important bridge builders, especially for relationships between EMS member churches, as they already have experience from various church and cultural contexts.

STARTING POINTS FOR AN EXCHANGE

The PCG and German EMS member churches are presented here as examples of the starting points for exchanges and shared learning, as well as their own cultural and spiritual influences, challenges and current issues.

The PCG is a young church. 59 per cent of congregation members are under 30 years old. This is mainly due to the demography in Ghana and has resulted in a church where young people form a broader base than in Germany. These differing circumstances could provide an opportunity to exchange ideas about the role of young adults in the churches and to look at one another's contexts through the eyes of the other. A mutual exchange could be used to seek out different ideas for young members to participate in congregational life and decision-making bodies.

Issues that could play a role in Ghanaian congregations include equality and opportunities in education, healthcare, sustainable agriculture, peace education and interfaith dialogue. All these aspects offer starting points for shared learning since they can also offer a basis for critical consideration in the German context. In principle, the question can be asked how churches contribute to local life and what role religion plays in society in terms of promoting peace and preventing extremism.

German EMS member churches are facing completely different challenges and developments. Church membership is declining. This means that the regional state churches are undergoing a process of transformation and are preparing for fewer members and fewer resources in the future. At local level, this often leads to mergers between congregations or church districts. It can be assumed that this trend will continue in the coming years. In 2022, a study showed that two thirds of Protestant church members were tending towards leaving the church. The main reason cited was a lack of interest in religion and the church. It seems that many people no longer perceive the church as relevant.

Partnership groups could address this issue and ask each other where and how the church is relevant and visible within their own contexts. Sharing information about the contexts



The partnership group taking part in a workshop on sustainability and climate change.

and conditions of church life can lead to new ideas, comfort, encouragement or self-reflection about the changes taking place on the German side.

"Partnerships help people to grow spiritually."

The (re-)use of church buildings is a much-discussed topic in many German congregations. Partnership groups could jointly address issues relating to buildings and worship locations and shed light on different prospects. The majority of German church members state social motives for their membership: 43 per cent cite that an important motivation for them is the church's "commitment to solidarity and justice in the world and the future of humanity". This touches on a key aspect of partnership work, namely practising mutual solidarity across countries and church boundaries. How can this mutual solidarity and the pursuit of justice be made a common theme in church life on both sides and how can it be expressed and publicised in projects or campaigns?

Theresa Gilcher is pastor of the Protestant Church in the Palatinate.

QUESTIONS ABOUT PARTNERSHIP WORK

The following questions are practical suggestions when considering and planning partnership work.

Start and aim: What was the intention for starting the cooperation? What is the vision behind the relationship? What are the themes that address the history of missions and the historical and current connections between Europe and the Global South?

Continuity: How sustainable is the partnership? Who is involved in the partnership and what is their motivation? How many people are involved on each side of the partnership? What happens if people drop out? What would happen on both sides if the partnership were to end?

Participation: Do all participants have access to important information and materials relating to the relationships, e.g. plans, website? What are the possibilities for young adults to participate?

Communication and exchange: Does different access to communication media (e.g. internet, telephone) affect mutual exchange? What is the main language of communication? How are language barriers dealt with? What cultural and other differences influence communication?

Press and public relations: What are the formats and media used for public relations and are they accessible to one another? Who decides on which photos and articles are published? Are people portrayed with dignity and as self-determined individuals in articles, photos and videos?

Legal matters: How well do both partners know the existing regulations and laws that pertain to their joint work in each other's country? Is there a code of conduct for the cooperation? How was this decided?

Transparency and finances: How do partners communicate with each other about financial matters? Who is accountable to whom with respect to factual and financial reports?

Encounters and travel: Who decides on who participates in encounters? Is a certain level of language proficiency a condition for participation or is translation planned if necessary? Is an agreement reached concerning the objectives of the encounter? Who defines the programme contents and the agendas for encounters?

Projects: Who proposes ideas for new projects or measures in a partnership? Who decides on the target project and how is its success measured? Do participants in the Global South assume an active role in the design and implementation of projects?

These questions are taken from a questionnaire on North-South relations compiled by the "Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Eine Welt-Landesnetzwerke in Deutschland" (Association of One World Regional Networks in Germany, AGL). They have been adapted to the needs of church partnership groups within the EMS Fellowship. Learn more about AGL here:

agl-einewelt.de/English



WITNESS TO THE WORLD

PARTNERSHIPS IN MISSION

Partnerships in mission are a living witness to the transformative power of the Gospel. They show how Christians from different cultures, backgrounds and denominations can work together to spread the Gospel and serve the destitute. Partnerships in mission show the world that Christians not only talk but also act.

The issue of partnerships in mission is central to understanding God's work in the world. Christians of different traditions and denominations are more and more aware that they must work together in a spirit of unity in order to do God's will. Such an ecumenical cooperation is not only theologically needed but is also a practical response to the challenges of our time. In an increasingly interconnected world, the mission of the Church is at a critical turning point. The complexity of modern challenges – environmental crises, economic inequalities, social unrest and spiritual fragmentation – requires global cooperative action, not just local efforts.

UBUNTU AND GOD'S MISSION

From an African point of view, the concept of missionary partnerships and the ecumenical understanding of God's work in the world are rooted in the principles of Ubuntu and the community-oriented nature of African societies. Ubuntu – often translated as “I am because we are” – reflects the interconnectedness of human existence. This point of view emphasises that God's mission, *missio Dei*, is not an individual endeavour but a communal act involving people from different denominations, traditions and contexts. They work together for the common good of humanity and creation.

The Presbyterian Church in Korea (PCK), the Presbyterian Church in Ghana (PCG) and the Protestant Church in the Palatinate (EKP) have been in a trilateral partnership for over 20 years – pictured here at a meeting at the EMS Secretariat. Among other things, the partnership supports a computer training school in Ghana.





The Evangelical congregation in Waiblingen (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Württemberg) has maintained a direct partnership with the South Indian Diocese of Tirunelveli since 1994. A linden tree planted to mark the 30th anniversary of the partnership is a visible symbol of this vibrant relationship.

God's mission is understood as a shared responsibility that transcends denominational boundaries and focuses on unity in diversity. Ecumenism is understood as a natural extension of this approach which focuses on reconciliation and mutual respect.

THE TRINITY AS A MODEL

From a theological point of view, God's work in the world is based on relationships. The trinity itself is a model of perfect partnership: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit work in unity while maintaining different roles. Partnerships between denominations, traditions and even between religions reflect the relational aspect of God's work. Ecumenical cooperation also underscores the principle of *missio Dei*, God's mission, as mentioned previously. The church does not possess the mission but participates in what God is already doing in the world. Participation requires humility, openness and a willingness to recognise God's presence in unexpected places and through unexpected partners.

Partnerships are not just about what the church can do; they are also about who the church is.

Over the past few decades, the ecumenical movement has emphasised the importance of partnership in mission. There

is an increasing awareness that mission should not be based on an imperialistic or paternalistic approach. Instead, it should be based on equality, respect and mutual learning. Different traditions and denominations bring unique perspectives and gifts to mission. This diversity is not a weakness but a strength that reflects God's work in the world.

Partnerships in mission are not just a practical strategy. They are a theological necessity. An ecumenical perspective reminds us that we are part of something far greater than ourselves, a part of God's work unfolding in the world. Through cooperation, the church fulfils its calling to be a sign and instrument of God's reconciling love. In the end, partnerships in mission are not just about what the church can do; it is about who the church is – one body, united in Christ, participating in God's transformative work.

Partnership in mission is an essential expression of God's work in the world. It is based on the conviction that as Christians we are called to work together to make God's love visible. Ecumenical cooperation is challenging, but at the same time it offers an opportunity to experience the diversity and unity of the body of Christ. In a world full of division, ecumenical mission is a powerful sign of hope and reconciliation.

Rev. Alfred Moto-poh

FAITH THAT BUILDS BRIDGES

MIGRANT CONGREGATIONS IN STUTTGART

Christianity around the world is diverse and multicultural, thriving on the differences between people from different countries and continents. These people often organise themselves into communities based on their native language. There they develop their own community life, but also maintain close contact with local churches.



Christians from Cameroon and Ghana celebrate a worship service together with the EMS in the Waldkirche.

Stuttgart has become home for a growing number of these communities, reflecting the city's increasingly multicultural and multireligious society. These communities play a significant role in promoting cohesion within their own communities, preserving cultural identity and integration into German society.

Many Christians from Ghana and Cameroon have found a new home in Stuttgart's Waldkirche am Kräherwald and the Rosenbergkirche in Stuttgart-West. The two Protestant churches not only make their premises available to foreign-language communities, but also embark on an intercultural ecumenical journey together with them. In addition to the weekly services that each community holds in its own native language, they celebrate joint services, for example on Easter Sunday or Whit Monday on the "Feast of the World-wide Church" (Fest der Weltweiten Kirche). Together, they live the Christian faith in different languages, traditions and forms of expression and this contributes to the spiritual and cultural diversity of the city.

This clearly demonstrates that migration and faith are by no means secondary issues but represent a source of strength for coexistence. The congregations commit themselves to practising solidarity on the basis of the Biblical verse "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved

you." (John 15:12). They aim to do everything possible to avoid divisions and promote unity, "that they may all be one" (John 17:21). They advocate ecumenical coexistence in all its diversity in order to create closer future cooperation between the migrant community and the German community.

These churches seek to foster a sense of belonging and familiarity for specific ethnic communities while preserving the language and cultural practices of their home countries. While the first generation of immigrants often seek a spiritual home, their children, who identify as German, may not be fluent in the language of their ancestors. Younger generations often feel torn between the traditions of their parents and the cultural norms of their host country.

The Presbyterian congregations from Cameroon and Ghana in Stuttgart are very grateful to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Württemberg for its support and cooperation. Through its help, the congregations gain a sense of belonging and hope and have the necessary resources to grow both spiritually and as a community.

Rev. Alfred Moto-poh is pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC). He works as Officer for Education and Partnership at the Basel Mission – German Branch (BMDZ) in Stuttgart.

UNITY IN A FRAGMENTED WORLD



“Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ.”

1 Corinthians 12:12

Why did Paul choose the body as a metaphor for unity? The body is not a perfect system; it lives in constant tension between thought, feeling, and action. Sometimes the head knows what is right, yet the hands refuse to follow.

Paul speaks of one body with many members, yet not everyone possesses the same kind of body—physically or socially. Some have lost certain parts; some live with disabilities; others are “disconnected” due to pain or rejection. And yet, that is precisely where the beauty lies: the unity of Christ’s body is not built on perfection but on the willingness to stay connected through love.

However, in reality, the world and even the church often act like a body out of coordination: hands that oppress, mouths that curse, hearts that have grown numb. Can that still be called one body? In our fragmented world, filled with social, political, and ecological crises, this question becomes painfully real. What keeps us together when our directions and methods differ? Are we united by “commonality” or by a deeper “unity” that emerges from difference transformed in love?

True unity does not arise from domination but from humility, from making room for the other. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza reminds us that the metaphor of the body must never silence difference or justify hierarchy; rather, it calls us to a discipleship of equals. Dorothee Sölle also expands this vision

outward: when one member suffers, whether it be the poor, the silenced, or the wounded earth, the whole body suffers. The mystical body is political; solidarity is its heartbeat.

Being the body of Christ means living in relationships that must be continually restored. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul reminds us that when one member suffers, all suffer; when one rejoices, all rejoice. In a world where social, political, and spiritual bonds are easily broken, the church is called to be a body that learns to feel again, a body that refuses to grow numb to the pain of its own members.

The unity of the body of Christ is not based on perfection, but on the willingness to remain united through love.

Yet at times, this world makes us feel as though Christ is being crucified again, in the faces of children caught in war zones, in the bodies weakened by injustice, and in the hearts of people who have lost the strength to forgive. When one part of the body is torn apart by violence or indifference, the whole body bears the scar. When hatred replaces love, and when the mind seeks only to protect itself or its own advantage, the space for Christ to reign within the body slowly fades.

Still, this body holds an empty place, for Christ who was born among us, and for those who still mourn and tremble, having seen His death repeated before their eyes because justice can no longer revive the human spirit. Yet may that empty place be filled once more with the living heart of Christ, beating gently within us, teaching us to love again, so that this broken body, and this fractured world, might once more feel the pulse of love that heals.

*Rev. Junita (Toraja Church, Indonesia)
is a member of the EMS Presidium.*

NO BORDERS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

An international conference explores structural roots, intersectional impacts, and collaborative strategies to combat GBV in South Africa and Germany.

“No more silence, no more violence.”

This call to action echoed throughout the international conference “South Africa and Germany in Solidarity: Walking Together Against Gender-Based Violence,” held in Bad Boll, Germany, from 26–28 September 2025. Organized by the Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS), the Evangelical Academy Bad Boll, and the Kirchliche Arbeitsstelle Südliches Afrika (KASA), the event brought together activists, artists, theologians, and youth from both countries.

Participants shared strategies, listened to survivors, and co-created spaces for advocacy. The conference emphasized joint campaigns, faith-based initiatives, youth exchanges, and inclusive approaches to address all forms of GBV. A key focus was on sustaining these efforts beyond the event, aiming for a world where everyone is safe, seen, and free.

Perspectives for change

Nonhlanhla Anda Nkosi of the Moravian Church in South Africa (MCSA) and Chief Director at the Western Cape Department of Health and Wellness, addressed GBV as deeply rooted in patriarchy, poverty, and historical trauma. She highlighted how intersecting factors like poverty, race, and gender increase vulnerability, especially in rural areas where GBV is often treated as a private matter.

Despite South Africa’s legal frameworks, survivors face stigma and disbelief. The MCSA has responded with an Anti-GBV and Femicide Steering Committee focused on awareness, training, survivor support, and policy development. Nkosi emphasized the importance of Ubuntu – “I am because you are” – in the collective fight against GBV.

Challenges through digital violence

Uta Hergenröther from UN Women Germany highlighted similar challenges in Germany, where GBV is reinforced by patriarchal norms and digital technologies. Domestic violence remains the most common form, often perpetrated by men close to the victims. Digital violence – cybermobbing, hate speech, and stalking – is on the rise, intensifying offline abuse.

Marginalized groups, including trans, non-binary individuals, and women of color, face heightened risks due to intersectional discrimination. The consequences include restricted freedoms and threats to democracy. Hergenröther called for a comprehensive strategy involving legal reforms, education, media accountability, and full implementation of international conventions like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Istanbul Convention.

Solidarity is key

David William Daniels of the MCSA stressed the importance of active solidarity, particularly among faith communities in both countries. The conference underscored how intergenerational and international exchange fosters deeper understanding and sustainable engagement. Rev. Eleanor McCormick and Rev. Georg Meyer of EMS highlighted the value of such encounters and the need to continue dialogue for a more just and secure future for all.

Astrid Weyermüller



MATERIALS ON THE TOPIC OF CREATION

The new booklet “You and Me: Let’s Care for God’s Creation” from the EMS children’s programme **YOU + ME: FRIENDS AROUND THE WORLD** is now available.

The 20-page booklet offers new and creative ideas for children’s church services and invites children to consciously discover God’s creation with all their senses. A special focus is placed on Indonesia. There are many ways to use

the ideas contained in the booklet in children’s groups in parishes and congregations. Some elements are suitable for children’s or family services, others for youth groups.

“You and Me: Let’s Care for God’s Creation” is available free of charge at info@ems-friends.org. Complete sets for classes can also be ordered. We look forward to hearing from you.

Anna Kallenberger



Download the digital version here:

ems-online.org/creation-booklet



VOLUNTEERS WANTED: APPLY NOW FOR 2026!

Experience new impressions every day, small and big challenges in everyday life and valuable experiences for life - the EMS Ecumenical Youth Volunteer Programme offers young people the opportunity to develop personally and interculturally. Places are still available for 2026 in South Africa, India, Ghana, Jordan, Japan, South Korea and Indonesia. Applications for vacant positions can be submitted until the end of January 2026.

The current volunteers left for their assignments in the summer of 2025. 19-year-old Smilla from Sersheim is currently doing voluntary service at the Asian Rural Institute (ARI) in Japan, a training centre for organic farming. “I

knew long ago that I would follow in the footsteps of my eldest sister after graduating. She was in India with the EYVP a few years ago. That really made me want to spend time abroad,” says Smilla, whose duties include cooking and helping with farm work.

Other volunteers work in facilities for people with disabilities, schools, kindergartens or children’s homes. The EMS youth volunteer programme is based on an educational concept that has proven itself over many years. Among other things, it includes compulsory preparation and review seminars before and after the volunteer service. During their assignment, volunteers are also



supported by local contact persons, former volunteers (‘buddies’) and the volunteer programme team. Young people who are interested in participating must be between 18 and 28 years old at the time of departure in August, they must have passed their Abitur (equivalent to baccalaureate or high school certificate) or completed vocational training and have a good command of English. In addition, German citizenship or a permanent residence permit for Germany is required. Depending on the assignment location, voluntary service with the EMS lasts nine or ten months.

Melanie Tews

Find out more details at: ems-online.org/en/get-involved/eypv

[org/en/get-involved/eypv](https://ems-online.org/en/get-involved/eypv)



PLANNING AND BEQUEATHING YOUR ESTATE

REQUEST FREE BROCHURES NOW!

All our lives, we are constantly faced with important decisions. One of the most important of them is what will happen after we are gone. What will remain when I am no longer here? What should happen to what I have built up over decades?

It is often difficult to deal with these issues. The thought of our own mortality is often pushed to one side. In Psalm 90 it says, "So teach us to count our days that we may gain a wise heart." The words of the psalm admonish us to use the time God has given us wisely. This includes planning what to do with your estate in good time and responsibly.

The Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS) offers to accompany you along this path. Our materials and services help you gain clarity, make informed decisions and document them transparently. Our handouts "Was bleibt" (What remains) and "Nicht(s) vergessen (Don't forget anything)" give you valuable insights and basic information on the topics of preparing for the end and bequeathing your estate. Please note that both publications are only available in German.

The brochure "Was bleibt" offers easy-to-understand advice on how to write your own will. "Nicht(s) vergessen" informs you about how you can make proper provision in case you are no longer able to make decisions for yourself. Checklists help you keep track of all the important points. We would also be happy to send you a practical folder that you can use to keep your documents sorted by topic - where you can store powers of attorney or patient's decree (living will), for example. Of course, you will receive the brochures and the document folder free of charge.

In addition, we cordially invite you to our online seminars and information hotline days. Experts will be on hand to answer



your questions competently, without obligation and in total confidence, ensuring your complete privacy. Invitations to these events will also be published in the EMS Newsletter. Please feel free to register there or contact us directly. We will be happy to send you the latest information.

Joscha Quade

+49 711 636 78 -78
info@ems-online.org

Newsletter registration:
ems-online.org/en/newsletter



PROJECT WORK IN INDONESIA

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A BETTER SOCIETY

As a fellowship based on solidarity, the EMS brings churches and people together – not only worldwide, but also at regional level. A good example of this are the ten EMS member churches in Indonesia which learn from one another, share with each other and support each other in implementing their projects.

Indonesia is one of the four most densely populated countries in the world. The over 280 million citizens are mainly Muslim and live on thousands of scattered islands. Between them lie the vast expanses of the Indian Ocean. All of this poses a major challenge for the EMS member churches in Indonesia. If they want to work together, they usually have to overcome enormous physical distances. Their delegates therefore meet regularly at a central location for the EMS Regional Forum Indonesia. This forum provides a platform for the churches to support each other by offering advice and sharing successful concepts. They do not see themselves as a minority in a Muslim-dominated society, but as a special group that makes an essential contribution to the common good.

EXTENSIVE TRAINING PROGRAMMES

The **Toraja Church (GT)** runs an interdisciplinary training centre in the village of Kondoran on the island of Sulawesi. It supports local communities with training programmes in the fields of economics, environmental protection, nutrition, health, family counselling and conflict resolution. The centre's programmes train its students in efficient farming methods, in dealing with health risks and how to build peaceful relationships with others. People who have previously only been able to find low-status, poorly paid jobs can now learn new skills. Some of them, such as 31-year-old Suharyani, have even managed to become self-employed. She says "I've always wanted to become a seamstress and knew there was a demand for this in our village and our region. But I would never have been able to finance the training or the equipment on my own. The church project made it possible for me. The team on site continues to support and advise me if I have



Suharyani has successfully become self-employed as a seamstress.

any questions. I am incredibly grateful, not only for myself, but also for my children. Thanks to my income, I'll be able to give them a good start in life."

FISH FARMING AND RICE GROWING

The Kondoran Centre shares its expertise with other churches. A project run by the **Toraja Mamasa Church (GTM)** in the highlands of Sulawesi is also benefiting from this. The church has set up its own training centre which specialises in teaching the Mina Padi method. This agricultural method involves keeping fish in flooded rice fields. It has a synergistic effect: The fish eat pests and fertilise the rice plants with their excrement, so increasing yields. The sale of edible fish provides rice farmers with a welcome additional income. There is another advantage: The fact that the Mina Padi method requires no artificial fertilisers means that natural water resources are conserved.

ALGAE AGAINST POVERTY

Water also plays a crucial role in the “Algae Against Poverty” project launched by the **Christian Church of South Sulawesi (GKSS)**. After all, the sea is the basic requirement for the successful cultivation of these climate-friendly organisms that can be used in a variety of ways. The church is organising workshops at two locations in the coastal region of Labakkang in South Sulawesi and supports around 20 families to take over the cultivation and marketing of algae on their own responsibility. For this project, the church seeks advice from experts in research and business. The project is intentionally interfaith in nature and is aimed in equal measure at Christians and Muslims. It is expected that learning and working together will have a positive effect on interfaith coexistence in the predominantly Muslim population.

FOCUS ON SUSTAINABILITY

The **Protestant Indonesian Church in Luwu (GPIL)** has launched a project that both helps nature and supports the people who live off it. The project focuses on planting durian trees in deforested areas. Durian trees are widespread throughout Indonesia. They grow up to 50 metres high and can store large quantities of water. As a result, they make a significant contribution to maintaining an intact ecosystem



Durian trees help people earn their own living.

and protecting the land against soil erosion. Their tasty fruits with their characteristic spiky skin are very popular and can be sold at a profit on local markets. This should enable the participating families to earn their own living.

The churches in Indonesia are working together to shape the future. You can play a part in this. No matter whether it's 20, 50 or 100 Euros – every donation counts and opens up real opportunities.

Thank you so much for your support!

Team Fundraising



Growing and marketing algae empowers village communities.

Donations account:

Evangelische Mission in Solidarität (EMS)

Evangelische Bank eG

IBAN DE85 5206 0410 0000 0001 24

BIC GENODESF1EK1

“Insights Indonesia”

ems-online.org/en/support



THE YEAR IN FIGURES

EMS FINANCIAL REPORT 2024

The economic and political situation in 2024 was marked by growing uncertainty. The failure of the German government, the re-election of Donald Trump as US president and the many wars and conflicts around the world led to a significant decline in global economic growth. This has also affected the finances of the EMS member churches.

In times like these, it is even more important to pool resources and make best use of the global network of ecumenical relationships. An international association such as the EMS is urgently needed to support the work of the churches and member associations in difficult times. Due to what is happening in the world, it is good for churches to have a strong community that can support them financially, and we try to make sure this happens when we plan our budgets. For over 50 years, the EMS has been working to spread the Christian faith and create more justice and fairness in the world. In an increasingly divided world, this church commitment is more important than ever.

STABLE FINANCES

The auditors confirmed that the EMS accounts for the 2024 financial year were properly kept and complied with all regulations relating to size, legal form and specific economic sectors. Member contributions remained largely stable in 2024 and represent the primary source of EMS funding. At the same time, however, the EMS incurred higher material and personnel costs. This was due to the increased price of utilities, additional costs due to inflation and increased salaries for staff in the Secretariat. The EMS could offset some of these cost increases by savings in other areas. Fortunately, the EMS also recorded an increase in income from financial investments last year. Donations to the EMS and its affiliated mission societies (EVS, DOAM and BMDZ) rose by a total of 310,794.54 Euros in 2024. The coming years will require greater effort since the EMS depends on funds from its member churches, especially those in Germany, to ensure the continuity of programme work through their contributions from church taxes. Financial restructuring and cost cutting measures by German churches will affect the EMS.

FINANCIAL OUTLOOK

The church tax revenues of German churches, from which we finance large parts of the EMS budget, are declining. Coupled

FINANCIAL YEAR 2024

REVENUES

Donations, offerings	1,661,186.12
Contributions from members	4,119,991.00
Project refunds and subsidies	1,864,616.94
Interest, dividends	323,783.44
Rental revenues	116,737.53
Refunds and other revenues	172,014.97
Carried forward from previous year	4,385.51

8.262.715,51 EUR

EXPENDITURES

Project allocations	3,482,824.72
Allocations to reserves	500,000.00
Staff costs, administration	795,753.62
Staff costs, programmes	2,215,103.39
Ecumenical co-workers	73,259.60
Write-offs	23,987.33
Material costs, administration	568,086.96
Material costs, programmes	600,608.03

8.259.623,65 EUR

Annual surplus

3.091,86

with the number of people leaving the church, this is leading to major changes in the way the church is organised. In response to this ongoing situation, the EMS started to adapt itself to this trend several years ago. For example, a position was created for third-party fundraising with the aim of tapping into alternative sources of funding for joint projects. The duties of the Secretariat are gradually being transferred to the member churches, e.g. through cooperation with regional project coworkers. We are also pleased to see that the international churches are contributing more funds and personnel to support joint work and, in some cases, compensating for what the German churches can no longer contribute. The fact that the approach of internal church solidarity is changing in some areas and that positions in the Secretariat in Stuttgart will also be co-financed by India and Korea in future are encouraging

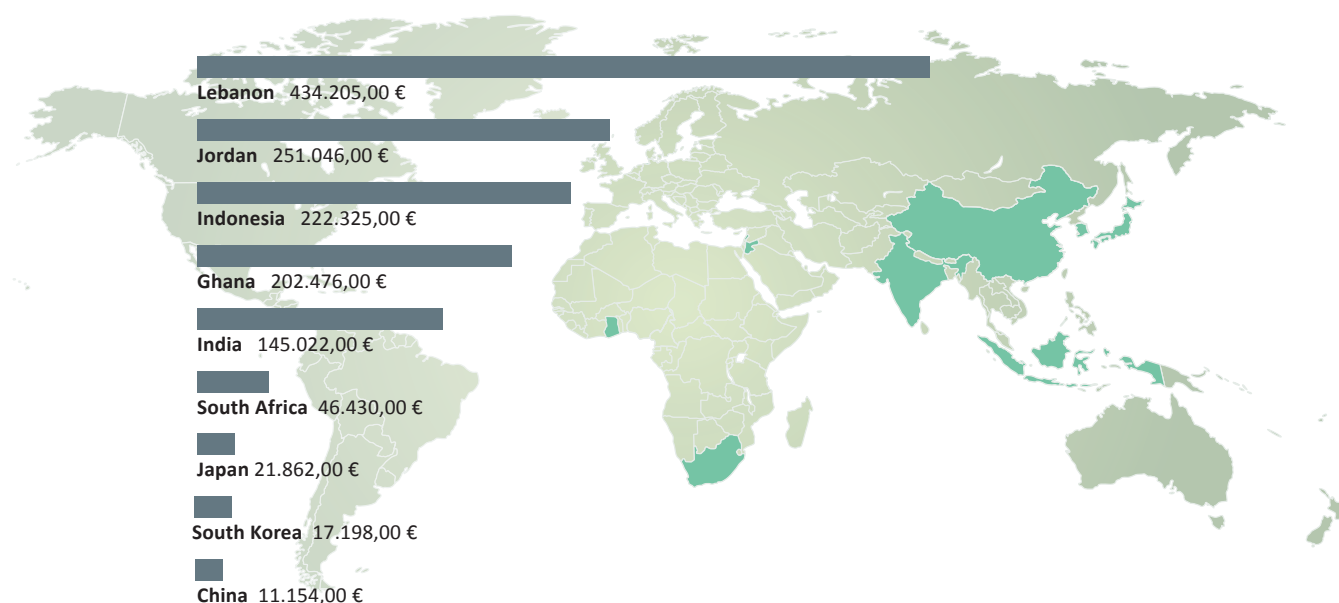
signs that real cooperation on an equal footing is being practised in the EMS.

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO RUDOLF BAUSCH

At the end of 2024, the EMS General Meeting bid farewell to EMS General Manager Rudolf Bausch, who retired. Rudolf Bausch was in charge of finances and headed the EMS administration for 13 years. On behalf of the EMS, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my predecessor for his successful work over the many years. The EMS is not only financially stable, but also a role model regarding its environmental and social sustainability. We wish "Mister Rudi" all the best and God's blessings for his retirement.

Ute Kauffmann, General Manager

EMS PROJECT FUNDING BY COUNTRY*



*The figures refer to the projects approved by EMS committees for 2024.



Access the EMS
Sustainability Report 2024 here:
ems-online.org/sustainability_report

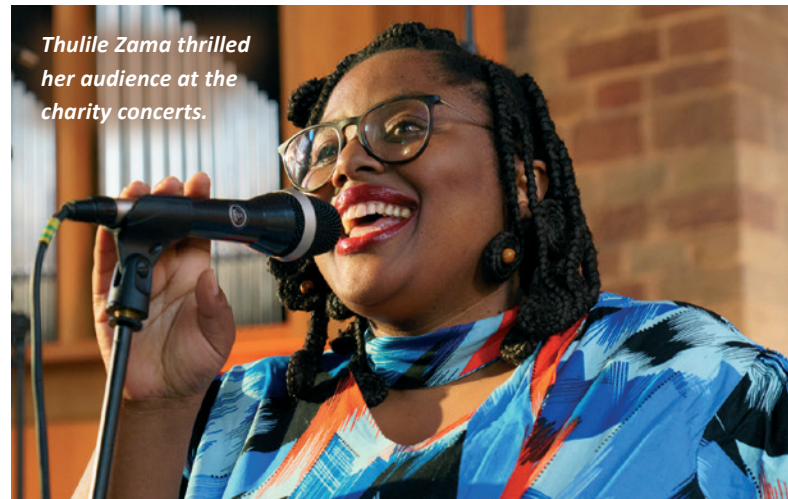
EMS CHARITY CONCERTS: MUSIC THAT GOES STRAIGHT TO THE HEART

At the initiative of the EMS Mission in Partnership Foundation, Thulile Zama visited Germany from the end of April to mid-May. The South African soul and jazz singer thrilled her audience wherever she performed.

Her voice enchanted people of all ages at her numerous performances. Her repertoire ranged from soulful ballads to exhilarating pop songs that encouraged the audience to clap along and dance. Whether she sang in English or isiZulu, her music transcended language barriers and went straight to everyone's heart.

The arrangements were as varied as the venues where Thulile Zama appeared. At the reception of the mission societies at the "Deutscher Evangelischer Kirchentag 2025" (German Protestant Church Congress) in Hannover, she was accompanied by a jazz trio from the Evangelical-Lutheran Mission in Lower Saxony (ELM), and her performance at the meeting of the Working Group of Protestant Entrepreneurs (AEU) was accompanied on guitar by EMS editor Stefan Schaal. At other concerts in Hesse and Baden-Württemberg, audiences had the chance to experience the fascinating interplay between Thulile Zama, who has her roots in jazz, and classical pianist Hyun-Joo Shin. During her performances, Thulile Zama blended effortlessly with youth and adult choirs and church musicians. The finale consisted of two concerts accompanied by jazz pianist Anselm Gulde.

Money from the donations went to the EMS Future Fund for Education. The EMS uses this fund to support educational projects for children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in India, Indonesia, Jordan and South Africa. Thulile Zama spoke from her own experience about the challenges that arise from a lack of educational opportunities and future prospects. She hopes that the concerts will help more children in South Africa and around the world to have the same opportunities for a life of work and dignity that she had herself.



Thulile Zama thrilled her audience at the charity concerts.

"The EMS and the EMS Foundation are very grateful to Thulile Zama for her efforts," underlined EMS Secretary General Dieter Heidtmann. "We would also like to thank all the congregations and organisers who offered their time and venues for the concerts and did a great deal of invisible but indispensable voluntary work behind the scenes. We are also particularly grateful to all donors. Your gift makes a difference, no matter how large or small the amount."

In addition to private donations, companies also supported the Future Fund through the concerts. We would therefore like to express our sincere thanks to the Evangelische Bank (Kassel), the Bank im Bistum Essen (BiB), the Versicherer im Raum der Kirchen (VRK) and the Kreissparkasse Böblingen for their contributions."

Joscha Quade

Find out more about the EMS Future Fund for Education here:

<https://ems-online.org/future-fund>



INTERNATIONAL MISSION COUNCIL MEETING IN BALI

The EMS Mission Council met in Bali, Indonesia, on 21 to 25 May 2025. The discussions focused on the further development of international cooperation within the EMS and on preparing an agenda for the coming years.

EMS Chair Rev. Heitmann, who presided over the meeting, thanked the Protestant Christian Church in Bali for its hospitality. "In a world where polarisation and self-interest are the order of the day, it is a sign and a statement that we have come together as churches from three continents, different cultures and Protestant traditions." Cooperation as equals within the worldwide EMS Fellowship sends a clear message: "We come together and ask ourselves the question: what is our common mission and our common message in today's world, given its beauty and its crises?"

Among the many topics that were discussed at the meeting in Bali, it was decided that the international EMS Fellowship should focus even more strongly in future on deepening and further developing its cooperation. Special attention should be paid to regional balance, close relations within the EMS, and human and financial resources.

The Mission Council also decided on important personnel issues. Dr Fabian Peters from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Württemberg was appointed to the EMS General Meeting



EMS President Anne Heitmann and members of the Presidium Rev. Junita and Rev. Andrew J. Odjowo (LTR).

as the new financial advisor. In addition, the ProPro Committee was re-elected. It consists of delegates from the various regions of the EMS member churches. They jointly decide on the selection and financing of programmes and projects as equals.

The Mission Council represents the international executive committee of the EMS. It consists of 21 members. The Mission Council makes fundamental decisions on EMS programmes.

Benjamin Helmschrott

IMPRINT EMS Insights 45th Year
Magazine of the Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS)
Publisher: Dr Dieter Heidtmann (Vogelsangstr. 62, 70197 Stuttgart)
Editors: International EMS Communicators' Network

Chief Editors: Stefan Schaal, Astrid Weyermüller;
Responsible editor as defined by the Baden-Württemberg Press Law:
Dr Dieter Heidtmann

Editorial address: Evangelische Mission in Solidarität, Vogelsangstr. 62,
70197 Stuttgart; Tel: 0711 636 78 -0, Mail: info@ems-online.org

Translation: Chris Blowers, Hinte
Graphics: Evangelisches Medienhaus Stuttgart

Donation account: EMS, Evangelische Bank eG
IBAN DE85 5206 0410 0000 0001 24, BIC GENODEF1EK1

Photo credits: Cover: EMS/Lohnes; p 2: EMS/Waiblinger; p 3: Dietrich;
p. 4/5: MÖD/Krauth; p 6: MÖD/Krauth; p 7: MÖD/Krauth; p 9: MÖD/
Krauth; p 10: Kohn; p 11: Opoku; p 12: EMS/Reimold; p 13: EMS/Krüger
(2); p 14: Kendenan, Isterheld; p15: Ev. Landeskirche in Württemberg;
p 16: GT; p 17: GKSS, GPIL; p 19: EMS/Reimold, bürofürvisuelles/istock-
photo; p 20: EMS/ Quade; p 21: EMS/Heidtmann; p 22: BMDZ/Bullard-
Werner; p 23: EMS/ Gräbe; p 24: EVS

EMS Insights appears twice a year and is free of charge.
ISSN 1611-1729

Articles bearing the author's name reflect the opinions of the author
and not always those of the editors. Reprints – including excerpts – and
reproduction only by permission of the publishers



WORKCAMP 2025: MORE THAN JUST WORK

This year's workcamp organised by the Basel Mission – German Branch (BMDZ) took place on 7 to 26 August in the Malaysian state of Sabah. The workcamp was jointly organised by the Evangelical Youth Organisation of Brackenheim (Germany) and the Basel Christian Church of Malaysia (BCCM).

26 young adults from Germany and Malaysia joined the international BMDZ workcamp: They repainted classrooms at a migrant school that were in dire need of refurbishment, fed pigs as part of an agricultural project, planted pineapples on the grounds of a Bible school and much more besides. What made it special was not only the work, but especially what came out of it: a cultural exchange, mutual learning, and genuine fellowship, where background and nationality were of no importance whatsoever. There, bridges were built, barriers were overcome, and lifelong friendships were formed. And, of

course, after work there was plenty of time to get to know the country and its people.

The 13 German participants wrote in their travel report: "During these weeks, we not only shared holidays, work and faith, but also experienced how enriching a community across national borders can be." Most of them were from the Evangelical Church district of Brackenheim (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Württemberg). The local youth organisation had helped to organise the workcamp. A return visit by the Malaysian participants is already planned and should take place near Brackenheim next summer.

Workcamps are an important part of the BMDZ's educational and partnership work. Young adults between the ages of 18 and 26 from different countries live and work together for a period of three weeks. The BMDZ maintains good relations with the Basel Christian Church of Malaysia (BCCM) which has 69,000 members. The church is known for its excellent schools and the only Protestant seminary, the Luther Seminary, in the state of Sabah.

Many thanks go to the Basel Christian Church of Malaysia (BCCM) and everyone who made this very special project possible.

Rev. Dieter Bullard-Werner

DOAM

NO ALTERNATIVE TO DIALOGUE WITH CHINA

This was the conclusion reached at this year's DOAM annual conference in June 2025 at the Berlin Mission Society on the topic of "Sinicisation of religions in China."

The conference covered a wide historical spectrum, from the first missionary work in China by the Nestorians, the Catholic and Protestant missions as well as the Cultural Revolution through to the current official religious policy of the Chinese Communist Party. The policy, initiated by Xi Jinping and in force since 2015, aims at adapting all five officially recognised religions – Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, Catholicism and Protestant Christianity – to socialism. The term 'sinicisation' refers to the integration of Chinese conditions, customs and traditions, whether cultural, social or political. The foremost duty of Chinese citizens is to love their nation and their party. Faith, on the other hand, must remain a private matter. Religious associations are also expected to actively propagate the ideology of the Communist Party.

The delegates at the annual conference, including many China experts of different religious and denominational affiliations, engaged in lively discussions on this complex topic. A recurring theme was the attempt to distinguish between the concept of 'inculturation,' which takes into account the characteristics of a culture into which Christianity is being

introduced, and ‘sinicisation,’ which assigns a narrow framework to religious practice and church structures in China under state supervision.

Jiale Huang kicked off the presentations with pictures of religious sites in traditional Chinese architecture. Dr Richard Ellguth gave a vivid introduction to the basics of Chinese religious policy, while Dr Ruomin Liu explained various periods in the history of Christianity in China, from the Jesuits to the present day. This was followed by presentations on sinicisation in the Catholic Church, Buddhism and contemporary Protestant theology. The conference concluded with highly informative presentations on genuine Christian art in the China Mission and more abstract modern Chinese representations of Christian themes, as well as an exchange of experiences with China experts.

Sabine Marschner



JORDAN: BUILDING FOR PEACE

It is probably one of the more unusual experiences of a voluntary assignment to look up at the sky and watch the fiery traces of deadly missiles fired from one country to another. But that is exactly what happened to the four EMS volunteers in Jordan when Israel and Iran were at war with each other in June.

However, the Kingdom of Jordan has recently demonstrated quite impressively that, through skilful political manoeuvring, it is perfectly capable of avoiding being drawn into a regional war. It was therefore probably a good decision to invest in the future of children and young adults who come from extremely difficult backgrounds and, in some cases, abject poverty. The boarding home at the Theodor Schneller School (TSS) has been completely refurbished for the first time since 1960. All those involved participated in the planning stage – this included the boarding

students, educators and teachers as well as the interior designers and engineers. The completely renovated building not only had to be appealing and comfortable, but also had to meet all child protection requirements. The Evangelical Association for the Schneller Schools (EVS), the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Württemberg and generous donors raised almost one million euros for this project.

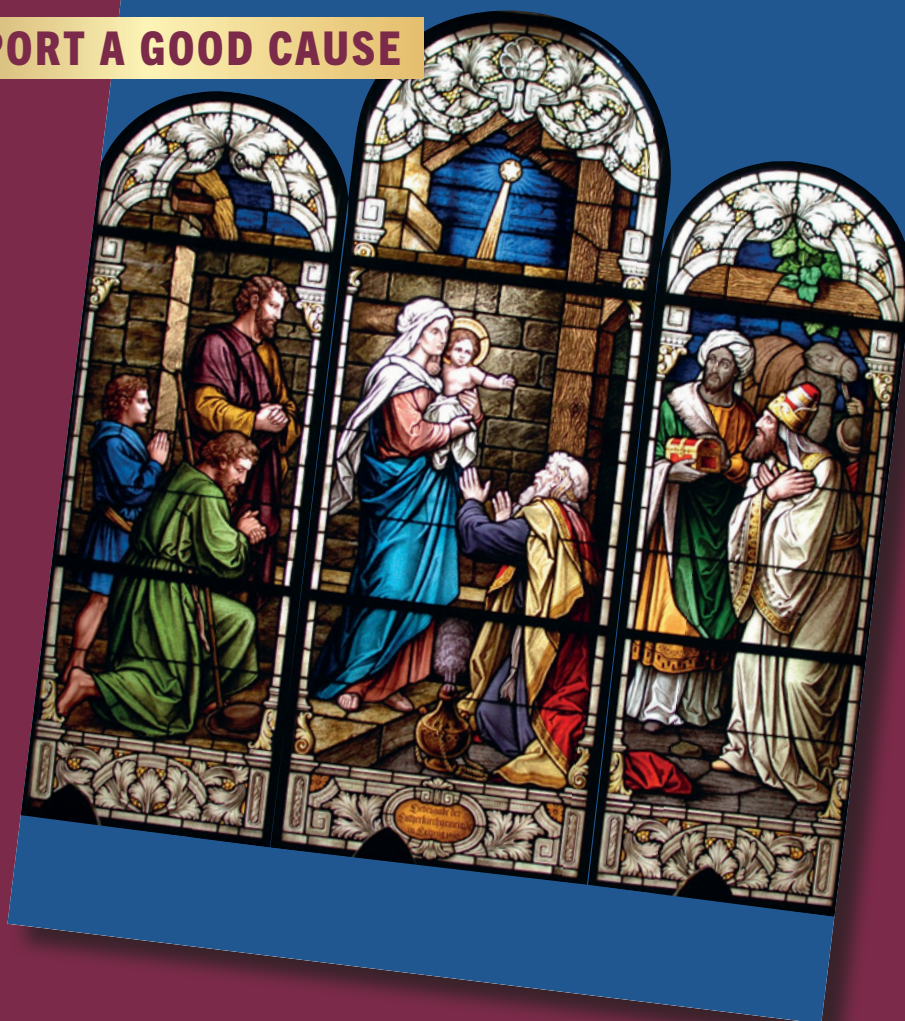
Nevertheless, the result was not at all a boarding home building “just like in Germany”. A partnership involves listening to local brothers and sisters. What they did not want was “smaller residential groups” as might be the normal case in Europe. In the Jordanian and Palestinian families from which the students come, many people share a single bedroom for sleeping. Otherwise, the children would feel lonely. So even after this refurbishment, the dormitories still accommodate ten children each – although they certainly are more beautiful and more practical than before!

The building was inaugurated with a big celebration on 31 May. The school choir, conducted by Qamar Badwan (photo), sang captivating songs, the scouts came with drums and bagpipes, and at the same time, last year’s school leavers were bid farewell. May a seed of peace sprout in the refurbished building – and may no more missiles fly in the future.

Rev. Dr Uwe Gräbe

SEND FESTIVE GREETINGS

AND SUPPORT A GOOD CAUSE



**ORDER
NOW!**

Our popular EMS Christmas cards are back again this year. They are a great way to spread joy to your loved ones while supporting the EMS Future Fund for Education for children and young adults all over the world.

Our Christmas cards feature the stained-glass window "The Adoration of the Magi" in the Christ Church of the Theodor Schneller School in Amman, Jordan. It was originally located in the church of the Syrian Orphanage in Jerusalem. The masterfully crafted window was made in the Ferdinand Müller stained-glass workshop in Quedlinburg am Harz (Germany).

Get your EMS Christmas cards now for only **1.50 Euro** per card (plus shipping) at ems-online.org/shop or at vertrieb@ems-online.org
Go directly to the EMS online shop here:



Proceeds from the sale go to the EMS Future Fund for Education. This way, you can give children and young adults the best Christmas present there is: the chance of a better future – through school education, vocational training and support for the whole family.

You can also support the EMS Future Fund for Education directly – simply by making an online donation: ems-online.org/future-fund

We would like to express our heartfelt thanks for your generosity and wish you a blessed and peaceful Christmas!