



EMS

CHURCHES IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

ANNUAL REPORT 2024



Evangelical Mission
in Solidarity



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Cover: The churches in Jordan and Lebanon are setting an example of peace and reconciliation through their work with the Schneller schools.

Above: Shop in Aplaku, Ghana

THE EVANGELICAL MISSION IN SOLIDARITY (EMS)

25 churches and five mission societies from Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East together form an international association based on equal partnership. Founded in Stuttgart in 1972, the Christian fellowship shares resources, decides jointly on projects and programmes, and learns from and with each other.

Dear Reader,

None of us lives to ourselves alone. If we live, we live to the Lord as well as with others, those who are strong and those who are weak. This is how Paul describes it in chapter 14 of his Epistle to the Romans. The international EMS Fellowship sees itself as a worldwide family, united in faith, but also sharing joy and suffering – a “Mission in Solidarity” in the true sense of the word.

TOGETHER, WE CAN ACHIEVE MORE THAN WE COULD ALONE

The international EMS Fellowship already offers many experiences that are important for the church’s future. The EMS is an international learning community where people from three continents work together as equals. EMS projects are developed by people at the local level. Decisions regarding programmes to be implemented are taken jointly by all concerned. That shapes the way we work together as well as our sense of community. Many an idea developed in one church can also be successfully adopted in another church or congregation.

The sense of community in the EMS comes from learning from one another in faith. How insignificant do my challenges seem when I encounter people who must live their faith under much more difficult conditions! Here, I am thinking of the small community of Christians in the Middle East that works tirelessly for peace and reconciliation across all borders; or the experienced church councillor in a Moravian

Church congregation in South Africa, patrolling the township at night with a group of neighbours to prevent criminal gangs from establishing themselves in her parish.

CONNECTED IN GOD’S FAMILY ACROSS THE WORLD

When the EMS member churches and member organisations convened in Freiburg for their General Meeting in November 2024, the main topic was “Religion in the public sphere”. The churches exchanged views on their individual challenges and how the Christian faith can be made relevant to other people. Solutions cover a wide spectrum, depending on the church and the social challenges each church faces. However, what they all have in common is that no church is alone. They know there are brothers and sisters in God’s family all over the world who partake in their lives, whom they cooperate with in projects and programmes, and who pray for them.



Rev. Dr Dieter Heidtmann
General Secretary



STRONG IN FAITH, STRONG IN HOPE WHY GLOBAL SOLIDARITY AMONG CHURCHES IS SO IMPORTANT

These are difficult times for churches all over the world. In many places, they are fighting for the right to practise their faith, as well as struggling against marginalisation and discrimination and standing up for peace and reconciliation. In many regions around the world, there are attempts to restrict the church's activities.

This global tendency also affects EMS member churches. It is not always governments that are responsible for this. Changes in a country's social climate often result in the situation of the churches becoming more difficult. Sometimes, it is developments within the churches themselves that contribute to their decline. Here are some examples of this among EMS churches.

CHURCHES IN JAPAN: STRANGERS IN JAPANESE CULTURE?

Christians make up a small minority in Japan. Most Japanese people are followers of Shintoism or Buddhism and know little to nothing about the Christian faith. As a result, Christian churches are often labelled as questionable religious communities and perceived as strange sects. Some people still consider churches to be part of the colonial policy that forced Japan to open up to the West in the 19th century. In Japanese society, xenophobia and an emphasis on Japanese nationalism

have increased significantly in recent years. As a result, some people in Japan see Christianity as going against Japanese culture. Christians are increasingly marginalised in society.

CHURCHES IN JAPAN: EDUCATION AND SOCIAL COMMITMENT

The United Church of Christ in Japan (KYODAN) is combating these social prejudices by focusing on offering educational and awareness programmes. The church is highly committed to helping people in need, for example by supporting those who were and still are affected by the Fukushima nuclear disaster. It also supports people discriminated against in Japan due to their origins or family history. This includes the Buraku who are people whose ancestors practised occupations considered unclean and who are therefore still marginalised in Japanese society today.

The worldwide EMS Fellowship supports the Japanese church in this work by promoting the National Church Council's interfaith dialogue study programme in Kyoto. For many decades, it has funded the Buraku Liberation Centre that advocates against the discrimination of social minorities.

CHURCHES IN INDIA: PRESSURISED BY HINDU NATIONALISM

Over 80 percent of India's population is Hindu. For years, the Hindu nationalist government and various radical Hindu groups have sought to restrict Christians, Muslims, and other religious minorities from freely practicing their faith. Many Christians face double discrimination, as they often belong to the Dalits – so-called “untouchables” – or the Adivasi, India's indigenous peoples. Churches frequently encounter subtle forms of obstruction, such as the freezing of bank accounts or the imposition of bureaucratic hurdles. Recently, however, there has also been a noticeable rise in violent attacks targeting Christian communities and church institutions.

CHURCHES IN INDIA: STANDING UP FOR THE WEAK AND THE PERSECUTED

Churches in India are actively responding to persecution by standing in solidarity with marginalized minorities. Christian children's homes, schools, and universities often provide the only opportunity for many children from Dalit or Adivasi backgrounds to break free from poverty and social exclusion. Deliberately, churches emphasize the Christian message that rejects oppression and violence. In places where Dalits have





been taught for generations that they are second-class citizens, the church proclaims God's love for all people and affirms the inherent dignity of every human being. Churches also prioritize intercultural and interfaith cooperation to foster peace within society. At the Henry Martyn Institute in Hyderabad – a Christian centre dedicated to promoting interfaith dialogue – Christians, Muslims, and Hindus work together for peace and reconciliation.

The EMS has been funding the children's homes, schools and universities of the Church of South India (CSI) for many years. It supports programmes to empower women in society and in support of the poorest. Since 2022, the Church of North India (CNI) has been a member of the global EMS Fellowship. In 2024, the EMS began preparing a project aimed at providing access to basic healthcare to Dalits in the state of Punjab.

CHURCHES IN INDONESIA: FREEDOM VARIES ACCORDING TO CONTEXT

In Indonesia, the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, 10 Protestant churches in Sulawesi, Halmahera and Bali belong to the international EMS Fellowship. Each one of them finds itself in a very different situation. There are regions in Indonesia where Christians make up most of the population and regions where they are only a small group. In the past, there have been repeated attacks on Christian communities, often carried out by small radical Muslim groups from outside the local area.

CHURCHES IN INDONESIA: CULTIVATING ALGAE TO COMBAT POVERTY

The small Christian Church in South Sulawesi (GKSS) relies on algae in its fight against poverty and marginalisation. Algae?

Yes, since algae is regarded as the "superfood" of the future. Cultivating algae helps fishermen in South Sulawesi boost their income and, at the same time, slows down climate change, since algae can bind large amounts of carbon dioxide. Originally, the church only intended to improve the income of the members of its own parishes. But then it decided that the project should benefit all villagers. In the meantime, it has become apparent that the project has not only improved the village's income but has also led to much better integration of the few Christian families into the village community.

The EMS has funded the development of this algae cultivation project by Protestant Church in South Sulawesi (GKSS). Support and advice mainly came from other Indonesian churches. In the EMS Regional Forum in Indonesia, the Indonesian churches help each other locally with advice and sharing successful concepts. They no longer see themselves as a minority in Indonesian society, but as a special group within the population that contributes to the common good in a way no one else can.

CHURCHES IN THE MIDDLE EAST: CHRISTIAN FAITH IN THE FACE OF WAR AND VIOLENCE

In 2024, everyday life for Christians in the Middle East continued to be dominated by the crises in the region. In autumn 2024, the conflict between the Hezbollah and Israel led to massive Israeli air strikes and the advance of Israeli troops into Lebanon. Christians were also affected by the consequences of the war. Like all schools, the Johann Ludwig Schneller School in Lebanon had to close for several weeks and the Near East School of Theology (NEST) suspended its



teaching activities. Missiles hit the immediate vicinity of the National Evangelical Church in Beirut (NECB).

The war has affected the Christian Palestinians of the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East in many ways. The Episcopal Church is the EMS member church that supports the Theodor Schneller School (TSS) in Jordan. When the conflict spread to the West Bank, it created an atmosphere of instability and fear among the Palestinian population. Since the terrorist attacks of 7 October 2023, there has been a significant increase in the number of roadblocks, military operations and arrests. Violence by militant Israeli settler groups has also affected Christian villages in the occupied territories. The lack of economic and political prospects is weighing heavily on the people. The churches are repeatedly confronted with severe restrictions that make everyday life difficult. As a Christian minority in the Holy Land, they were once again caught between all the lines of conflict in 2024.

CHURCHES IN THE MIDDLE EAST: COURAGE AND HOPE AGAINST VIOLENCE AND HATE

The refusal by Christians in the Middle East to give up despite crises and conflicts impresses us time and time again. Just imagine the courage it takes to resume work despite the danger to one's life and to stay with the people even after the

fourth attack on the Ahli Arab Hospital in the Gaza Strip! Or to continue everyday life at the Schneller School, the Christian retirement home or in the church congregations in Beirut despite inflation, the collapse of public order, war and terror! In Jordan, the Theodor Schneller School is a unique place where children from different faiths grow up together.

In 2024, the EMS continued its support for Christian churches in the region, particularly through projects that benefit a wide scope of people and sending a message of peace and reconciliation: the Schneller Schools in Jordan and Lebanon, the Ahli Arab Hospital in the Gaza Strip and the institutions for visually impaired children in Irbid and Salt. The international EMS Fellowship has also repeatedly advocated for ending the war and providing better protection for civilians. What is more, the crisis in the Middle East unites them in faith. Christians in the Middle East know that people in all the EMS churches worldwide are praying for them, their thoughts are with them, and they are committed to helping them whenever they are in need and distress.

A photograph of a person wearing a red raincoat and a hat, standing in a rice field. They are holding a long wooden pole, likely for planting or tending to the rice. The field is filled with rows of young rice plants in the water. In the background, there are lush green trees and banana plants.

2,364,924.72 EUR

FOR JOINT PROJECTS

PROJECT FUNDING AREAS 2024 *

48% SCHOOL EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING

24% DIACONAL WORK

12% JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF THE CREATION

7% THEOLOGICAL TRAINING AND FURTHER TRAINING

5% SPREADING THE GOSPEL

4% REDUCING POVERTY

*The figures refer to the 50 projects in the EMS major project programme and the 29 projects in the Small Project Fund.

LIVING FAITH WORLDWIDE: HOW THE EMS COMMUNITY STANDS UP FOR PEACE, JUSTICE AND HUMAN DIGNITY

In 2024, the Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS) funded a diverse range of projects and programs with over 2.3 million Euro. But even more important than the numbers is the guiding principle behind this work: putting love for our neighbours into action. The international EMS Fellowship actively advocates for the rights of the vulnerable, poor and marginalised – with the aim of promoting peace, justice and sustainable development.

“Jesus did not ask us to love him, but to pass on his love to the people around us,” emphasised Dr Stephen Lakkis, professor of theology in Pforzheim, when addressing the 2024 EMS General Meeting in Freiburg. “We show our love for God by taking part in the social and political action of love towards our neighbour.” He made it perfectly clear that the Christian faith is personal and public, revealing its transformative strength.

AGRICULTURE, PEACE AND EDUCATION: AN EXAMPLE FROM INDONESIA

On the Indonesian island of Sulawesi, the Toraja Church (GT) brings this vision to life through a long-standing agricultural development programme, launched in the 1980s and continually expanded since. After the religiously motivated conflicts of the early 2000s, peacebuilding became an additional focus. Today, the programme works to raise incomes, promote healthcare, protect the environment, and – most importantly – foster peaceful coexistence between Muslims and Christians in rural communities.

The heart of this work is the Kondoran programme centre. It not only acts as a coordination point, but it also serves as a role model – and it now acts as a source of inspiration to other churches and communities throughout Indonesia. One factor that is particularly important is that all projects are developed jointly with the local people and, at the end of a project, it is handed over to them as their own. This empowers them to sustainably improve their living conditions on their own.



Indonesia: Development centres in remote regions improve people's living conditions sustainably.



Ghana: Meeting of a Peacemakers group.

PEACE WORK STARTS WITH SMALL STEPS – IN GHANA AND BEYOND

Working towards peace is a key issue in Ghana. The Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG) launched the Peacemakers programme in 2005. It addresses young people, teachers and youth leaders and trains them to become peacemakers. In a country where many cultures and religions coexist, it is especially important to promote a culture of non-violence.

After training, the peacemakers become multipliers. They identify potential conflicts, pass on their knowledge to youth groups and thus strengthen peaceful coexistence – in the schools as much as in town districts. Their work shows that peace does not start with grand gestures, but with the willingness to take the first small step.

AGAINST DISCRIMINATION AND MARGINALISATION: THE BURAKU IN JAPAN

Another example of the many ways in which the EMS works is Japan. Here, the United Church of Christ (KYODAN) is committed to defending the rights of the Buraku, who are descendants of formerly marginalised professions. Although open discrimination is now prohibited by law, subtle and deep-rooted mechanisms of marginalisation still exist, such as secret lists containing the names and private addresses of Buraku people.



Japan: Demonstrators participating in a peace march in Tokyo.

This is where the KYODAN's Buraku Liberation Centre comes in, offering educational work, information campaigns, theatre projects and political involvement. The focus is on the younger generation who knows little about the past but is often under economic pressure itself. In workshops and community meetings, young adults learn ways to question prejudices, practise respect and develop new perspectives on life.

A LIVING FAITH THAT BRINGS ABOUT CHANGE

The EMS Fellowship proves that Christian faith is not only an inner calling, but also a public mission – and that social justice, education, interfaith dialogue and peace work are inextricably linked. Respect for other cultures and genuine solidarity are not empty words; they are the guiding principles of a global community that is committed to making life better for everyone.

As Jesus put it in the Sermon on the Mount:

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”



*All projects are described at
ems-online.org/en/support*

FINANCIAL REPORT 2024

FINANCIAL SITUATION

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 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 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

FINANCIAL OUTLOOK

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

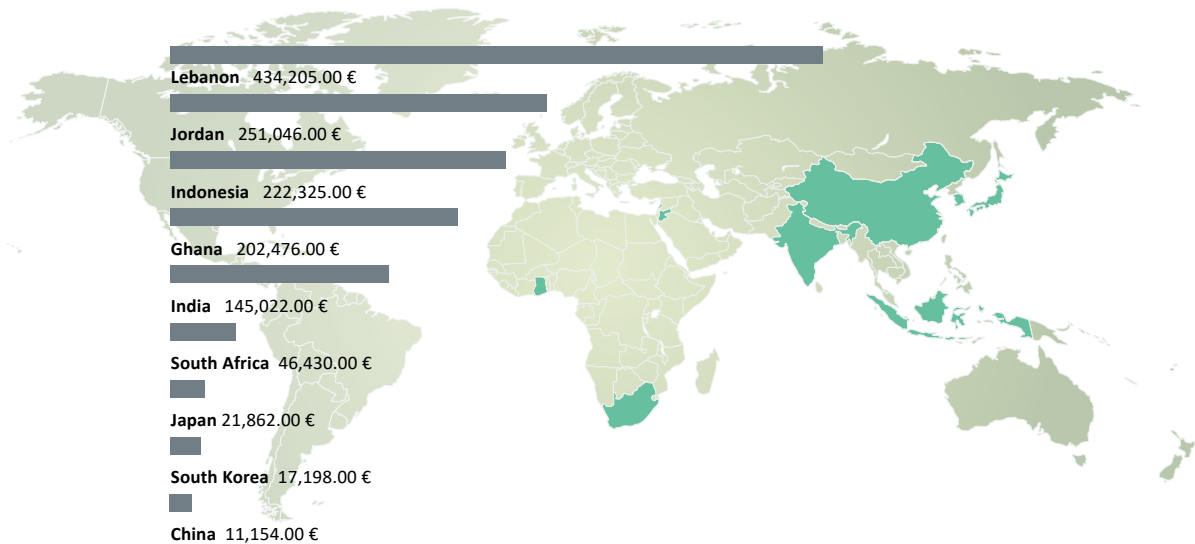
At the end of 2024, the EMS General Meeting bid farewell to EMS General Manager Rudolf Bausch, who retired. Rudolf Bausch was in charge of finances and headed the EMS administration for 13 years. On behalf of the EMS, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my predecessor for his successful work 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

Ute Kauffmann took over as General Manager of the EMS in September 2024. Previously, she worked for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Württemberg where she held senior positions in financial management.



EMS PROJECT FUNDING BY COUNTRY*



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



Access the EMS Sustainability Report 2024 here:
https://ems-online.org/fileadmin/EMS/Ueber_Uns/EMS_Sustainability_Report.pdf

PEOPLE AND EVENTS

EMS HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR 2024

NEW MISSION COUNCIL AND NEW PRESIDIUM

In November 2024, the EMS General Meeting elected a new International Mission Council and a new Presidium. Rev. Anne Heitmann was elected as the new Chair.

Church Councillor Anne Heitmann heads the “Ecumenism and Church Worldwide” department of the Protestant Church in Baden (EKIBA). She has been involved in the work of the EMS Mission Council since 2014 and has already served as member of the Presidium for the past two years. Anne Heitmann succeeds Rev. Dr h.c. Detlef Knoche who did not stand for re-election due to his retirement. The Presidium represents the EMS externally and presides over the committees of the international church fellowship.

“At a time when the world is becoming more 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,” said Anne Heitmann on her election.



The newly elected Presidium consists of Andrew J. Odjawa, Anne Heitmann, Junita and Markus Jäckle (from left to right).



Younger and more international: members of the newly elected EMS Mission Council.

The deputy chairs of the EMS are now Senior Church Councillor Markus Jäckle from the Protestant Church of the Palatinate, Rev. Andrew Jackson Odjawa, Director for Ecumenism and International Relations at the Presbyterian Church in Ghana (PCG), and Rev. Junita from the Toraja Church (GT) in Indonesia. This is the first time that the EMS Presidium is comprised of four members instead of three.

In addition to the re-elections for the Presidium, the scheduled elections for the International Mission Council also took place. The Mission Council is now made up of 21 members of the international EMS fellowship. This was made possible by amendments to the EMS Constitution which were previously adopted. The aim of these amendments is to ensure that the composition of the EMS committees better reflects the international nature of the association. Other amendments to the Constitution aim at ensuring that more women and young adults are represented on EMS committees in future. Four members of the International Mission Council are now under 35 years old.

Scan the QR code for a complete list of the names of all the delegates of the International Mission Council:



INTERNATIONAL CONSULTATION OF EMS FINANCIAL MANAGERS

In April 2024, the financial managers from 25 international churches and five mission societies met at the 4th “Treasurers’ Consultation” of the Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS) in Hofgeismar, Germany. The treasurers from Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East discussed how to invest church funds in an ecologically, socially and economically sustainable way and how to implement compliance and anti-corruption measures.

The fact that sustainability is a very broad term that is interpreted in wide variety of ways by the treasurers became evident from the different approaches discussed. For many years, the EMS itself has based its approach on the guidelines for ethical and sustainable investment issued by the Working Group of Church Investors (AKI). These guidelines are in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). On the other hand, many international churches are more focussed on direct investments in local projects. At the same time, they are willing to take on higher risks than, for example, German churches are allowed to do.

GENDER-JUST USE OF FUNDS

Following its certification in March 2023 for environmental, social and financial sustainability, known as the EMASplus certification, the EMS has committed itself to gender-sensitive budgeting. The certificate includes a major section on this subject.

The EMS has defined the specific requirements to integrate a gender-just aspect at all stages and levels of policies, programmes and projects. The aim is to promote gender justice and the full integration of the gender aspect in all areas of EMS work and in all phases of the budgeting and planning process. Further steps have been taken in this direction, and the budget for the next two years will continue to emphasise gender-sensitive budgeting, in particular in projects, and gender-sensitive staffing and representation on EMS governing bodies.

LISTENING TO CHILDREN'S VOICES

From 16 to 23 April 2024, experts for Sunday School from EMS churches in South Africa, India, Indonesia and Germany

met to develop guidelines for a Child Friendly Church. The invitation was sent by the EMS children’s programme YOU + ME: FRIENDS AROUND THE WORLD. The host church, the Church in Bali (Indonesia), also invited children to the meeting because the aim was not to talk “about” children, but “with” children. The guidelines should focus on children and should be implemented based on practical aspects. In the end, the conference adopted a draft for suitable guidelines and are represented by the fingers of a hand. Each of the five fingers stands for a key aspect of a Child Friendly Church: atmosphere, environment, Bible, worship and child protection. The FRIENDS team will now further develop the concept.

LANDESMISSIONSFEST (REGIONAL MISSION FESTIVAL) IN HEIDENHEIM

What is an ecumenical cocktail bar? What does mission mean in Ghana, Jordan or Korea today? Can mission be the vital link to connect people across borders and cultures? At the Landesmissionsfest in Heidenheim on 16 June 2024, the EMS was represented in the worship service, on stage and sported an attractive stand in the exhibition area. There, it was staffed by many volunteers and presented the work of the EMS, the Basel Mission – German Branch (BMDZ), the German East Asia Mission (DOAM) and the Protestant Association for the Schneller Schools (EVS). Due to the hot summer weather, a non-alcoholic drink at the ecumenical EMS cocktail bar was very much welcomed and became very popular. All those involved were delighted with the sense of community and the many shared experiences – true to the motto of this year’s Landesmissionsfest of the Evangelical Lutheran



Church in Württemberg: “Boundless. United by Mission”. This colourful church festival focused on encounters, exchange and networking. A special highlight during the worship service was the participation of EMSO the elephant, the mascot of the EMS children’s programme. EMSO brought lots of happiness to the children and made them smile.

YOUNGER AND MORE DIVERSE

A total of 11 positions were restaffed at the Secretariat in Stuttgart in 2024. This is equivalent to about one third of the staff. Two of these 11 positions were changes at leadership level. Ute Kauffmann is the new General Manager of the EMS. She took over the post from Rudolf Bausch who retired after 13 years in the senior management. The other new member of the Secretariat is Rev. Eleanor McCormick. She has been the Head of the Programmes and Networks department at the EMS since September 2024 and is also responsible for the Unit for Intercultural Theology and Education, Women and Gender. The new staff members have made the EMS Secretariat a much younger and more diverse team.



NEW INTERFAITH STUDY PROGRAMME IN INDIA

In cooperation with the EMS, the Henry Martyn Institute (HMI) in Hyderabad, India, has offered a six-month interfaith study programme since 2024. The programme is aimed at both students and postgraduates from EMS member churches. The Henry Martyn Institute (HMI) is an ecumenical Christian organisation dedicated to the objective study of religions and the promotion of interfaith relations. The programme is designed to deepen students’ awareness of their own cultural and religious context, while fostering interfaith learning and sensitising their own church to the need for dialogue.

The six-month study programme starts in September every year. The closing date for applications is 1 November of the previous year. For further information about the programme, please contact Sabine Marschner, marschner@ems-online.org or tel. +49 (0) 711 636 78-30.

LAUNCH OF THE EMS NEWSLETTER

The EMS has taken the next step in its online communication and launched its regular newsletter in German and English in October 2024. The aim is to make the work of the EMS more transparent and to strengthen the exchange between members in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Europe.

The newsletter’s target audiences are interested parties, supporters and partner organisations. It provides regular updates on the wide range of EMS activities, including development projects, educational initiatives and peace-building measures as well as news from church, mission and theology. A special focus is placed on EMS Emergency Aid work. In crisis situations, such as natural disasters or humanitarian



emergencies, the rapid and uncomplicated supply of information makes it possible to mobilise aid to where it is needed. This makes the newsletter an important tool for taking swift action in an emergency.

If you are interested, register for the newsletter free of charge at www.ems-online.org.

MIDDLE EAST

ANOTHER YEAR IN CRISIS MODE

In autumn 2024, violence in the Middle East flared up and spread across Israel, Palestine and Lebanon in the wake of the terrorist attack on Israel on 7 October 2023.

The Anglican Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza, which belongs to the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, was hit by air strikes several times in the year and even had to be temporarily evacuated on one occasion. However, the destruction in 2024 was not as severe as the Palm Sunday bombing in 2025, when an entire building, housing the emergency room, pharmacy and laboratory, had to be replaced by a tent. The hospital staff has always resumed service immediately after such devastation; several hundred patients are treated as inpatients every day and several dozen surgeries are performed. This work is partly supported by the EMS Emergency Aid fund and by numerous donations from the EMS Fellowship.

At the Johann Ludwig Schneller School (JLSS), the change of director from Rev. George Haddad to Ms Odette Haddad-Makhoul (the former English coordinator) took place at the very moment when the war spilled over into Lebanon on a massive scale in September. One of Ms Makhoul's first official acts was to evacuate the facility for a whole month while missiles hit the vicinity. However, just one month before the fragile ceasefire of November 2024, it was decided to bring all the students back to the school and boarding home. Despite all the challenges, the institution continues to serve Christian, Muslim and Druze children coming from the margins of society – from desperately poor and broken families, as well as orphans and half-orphans.

Another school run by the National Evangelical Church of Beirut (NECB), the National Protestant College in Kfarshima, was also at extreme risk during this period, as Israeli missiles regularly struck the neighbouring Shiite neighbourhoods of the so-called "Dahiyeh". Fortunately, this institution also remained undamaged and is now undergoing energy-efficiency refurbishment funded by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Württemberg.

Due to the war, the EMS was once again unable to send students to the Near East School of Theology (NEST) through its SiMO programme (Study Programme in the Middle East). However, the institution continues to operate and train the next generation of pastors serving the evangelical churches in the region. Here, too, there was a leadership change in September. Dr Martin Accad took over the office of university president from Dr George Sabra. As was the case with George Haddad, George Sabra was unable to officially step down in 2025 due to the war.

Many NEST alumni are now serving in Syria, where a regime change took place in December 2024 after 13 years of war. In the early days of the Ash-Shara'a government, there were numerous positive signals in favour of the so-called "minorities", as their representatives had always demanded full political and social equality. But now, Alawites, Druze and Christians in particular, fear for their lives once again.

The situation in Jordan is much more positive. For months, the Kingdom has repeatedly demonstrated its ability to avoid being drawn into regional wars and upheavals. In April 2024, the Evangelical Association for the Schneller Schools (EVS) organised a visit by several donors to mark the inauguration of a new organ that had been shipped from Wendlingen am Neckar to Jordan. This was followed by the start of a major refurbishment of the boarding home funded by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Württemberg.

*Dr Uwe Gräbe, Head of the Middle East Unit
and EVS Executive Secretary*



Entrance area of the Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza.



AFRICA

- 1 GHANA: Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG)
- 2 SOUTH AFRICA: Moravian Church in South Africa (MCSA)

MIDDLE EAST

- 3 JERUSALEM AND THE MIDDLE EAST: The Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East
- 4 LEBANON: National Evangelical Church in Beirut (NECB)

ASIA

- 5 INDIA: Church of South India (CSI)
Church of North India (CNI)
- 6 INDONESIA: Evangelical Christian Church in Halmahera (GMIH)
Evangelical Christian Church in Minahasa (GMIM)
Christian Church in South Sulawesi (GKSS)
Christian Church in West Sulawesi (GKSB)
Christian Protestant Church in Bali (GKPB)
Protestant Indonesian Church in Donggala (GPID)
Protestant Indonesian Church in Luwu (GPIL)
Protestant Church in South-East Sulawesi (GEPSULTRA)
Toraja Church (GT)
Toraja Mamasa Church (GTM)
- 7 JAPAN: United Church of Christ in Japan (KYODAN)
- 8 KOREA: Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK)
Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK)

EUROPE

- 9 GERMANY:
Basel Mission – German Branch (BMDZ)
German East Asia Mission (DOAM)
Moravian Church (European Continental Province)
Protestant Church of the Palatinate (EKP)
Protestant Church in Hesse and Nassau (EKHN)
Evangelical Church of Kurhessen-Waldeck (EKKW)
Protestant Church in Baden (EKIBA)
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Evangelical Association for the Schneller Schools (EVS)
Moravian Mission Society (HMH)
- 10 SWITZERLAND: Basel Mission (BM)

COLLABORATIONS

- 11 China: China Christian Council (CCC), Amity Foundation

THROUGH BMDZ AND BASEL MISSION

- 12 CHINA, HONG KONG: Tsung Tsin Mission (TTM)
- 13 CAMEROON: Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC)
- 14 MALAYSIA: Basel Christian Church of Malaysia (BCCM)
Protestant Church in Sabah (PCS)
- 15 NIGERIA: Church of the Brethren in Nigeria (EYN)
- 16 SOUTH SUDAN: Presbyterian Church of South Sudan (PCOSS)

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