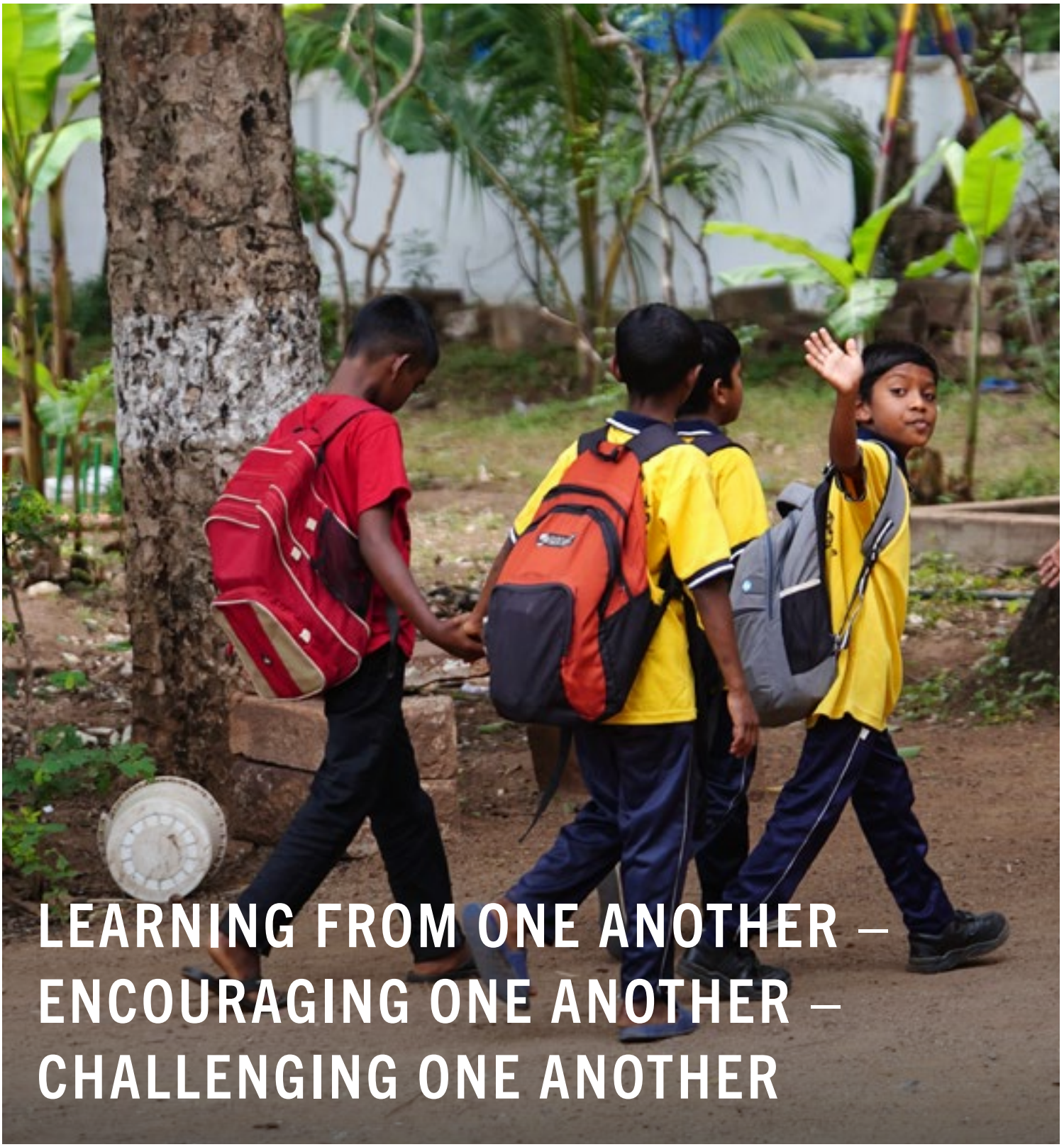


LEARNING FROM ONE ANOTHER – ENCOURAGING ONE ANOTHER – CHALLENGING ONE ANOTHER

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

ems Evangelical Mission in Solidarity



The women in this microfinance group earn their own income through their market stall in Chennai, strengthening their economic independence.

CONTENT

3 GENERAL SECRETARY'S ANNUAL REVIEW
4 PEOPLE AND EVENTS IN 2025
7 INTERNATIONAL STUDY PROGRAMMES
9 ECUMENICAL VOLUNTEERS PROGRAMME
11 ECUMENICAL CO-WORKERS
12 PROJECTS AND PROGRAMMES IN THE EMS FELLOWSHIP
16 FUNDING AND DONATIONS
17 EMS FOUNDATION MISSION IN PARTNERSHIP
18 GOVERNANCE
19 FINANCIAL REVIEW 2025
20 THE WORD OF EMS

Cover: Pupils in Gadag, India.

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.

LEARNING FROM ONE ANOTHER – ENCOURAGING ONE ANOTHER – CHALLENGING ONE ANOTHER

The Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS) is a fellowship of churches and mission societies from Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. Its members work together as equals, sharing responsibility and making joint decisions about finances, personnel, programmes, and projects.
For the international member churches, this model of cooperation makes a fundamental difference. EMS is not an aid agency in which some provide support while others receive it. Rather, it is a church family in which every member contributes its experiences, perspectives, and gifts. EMS understands itself as a learning community where, as its theological guidelines put it, we "learn from each other, encourage each other, and challenge each other" across borders in our common witness.

LEARNING FROM ONE ANOTHER

Learning from one another takes place throughout the EMS fellowship in many ways. Young people serve as volunteers in member churches, encountering new cultures and realities. Theology students gain insights into religious diversity through EMS study programmes in countries such as Japan, India, and Lebanon. Within the International EMS Women's Network, women exchange experiences and explore how churches can respond to gender-based violence.
At the heart of EMS lies a willingness to see the world through the eyes of others and to allow new perspectives to deepen and enrich our understanding.

ENCOURAGING ONE ANOTHER

Through its member churches and mission societies, EMS supports schools and children's homes in various countries, helping children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds gain access to education and new opportunities.
Yet the goal goes beyond practical support. It is also about nurturing confidence, dignity, and hope. Indian theologian Prof. Dr. Vethakani Vedhanayagam, who grew up in a homeless family, described how poverty can undermine self-esteem and future opportunities. Reflecting on her own journey, she writes: "Through my own life experiences, I came to a deeper understanding of the life of Jesus."

CHALLENGING ONE ANOTHER

Learning from one another is not always comfortable. Churches in Indonesia, for example, express concern about the continuing decline in church membership in Germany. Their questions invite reflection on how German churches might learn more intentionally from international partners, some of whom are successfully engaging new generations in the life of the church.
The biblical motto for 2025 was: **"Test everything; hold fast to what is good"** (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Looking back, these words capture well what it means to be a learning community: to remain open to new experiences, discern together, and learn across cultural and geographical boundaries.
With gratitude, we look back on the year 2025 and thank all who have supported and sustained the shared ministry of EMS. Through their commitment, our fellowship continues to learn, encourage, and grow together.



Rev. Dr Dieter Heidtmann
EMS General Secretary





In January 2025, the EMS Youth Network Indonesia hosted a meeting in Jakarta.

PEOPLE AND EVENTS IN 2025

YOUTH MEETING IN INDONESIA

From 24 to 28 January, the EMS Youth Network Indonesia brought together young people from diverse regions and EMS member churches for an inspiring gathering in Jakarta under the theme **"Shine Your Light: Listen, Learn, Serve"** (Matthew 5:14-16). The meeting welcomed participants from all ten Indonesian EMS member churches, providing a valuable opportunity for fellowship, learning, and exchange.

Yessica Kansil organized and co-prepared the meeting. Rev. Gustina Saruran attended in person, while EMS volunteers and Youth Network members joined online from Stuttgart, sharing greetings from the EMS Secretariat.

REGIONAL AND PROGRAMME SUPPORT OFFICERS STRENGTHEN INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION AT EMS

In April 2025, the EMS Secretariat in Stuttgart welcomed its four Regional and Programme Support Officers (RSOs/PSOs) for their first joint working week. They are Boneta Neethling (South Africa), Rev. Sunyoung Huh (Korea), Rev. Christopher Dharmaraj (India), and Rev. Gustina Saruran (Indonesia).

Working with member churches in the respective countries, the officers explored ways to deepen international cooperation, strengthen member participation and further develop



The new RSO and PSO staff members during their introduction visit to the EMS Secretariat in Stuttgart.

the work of EMS. Workshops, meetings and exchanges with colleagues in Stuttgart highlighted the value of working together across regional and cultural boundaries.

As key link persons between projects, churches and the EMS network, the RSOs and PSOs play a vital role in fostering dialogue, building trust and turning global partnership into lived reality.

INTERNATIONAL MISSION COUNCIL MEETING IN BALI, INDONESIA

The Christian Protestant Church in Bali (GKPB) hosted the EMS Mission Council meeting from 21 to 25 May 2025.



The EMS Mission Council during its 2025 meeting in Bali.



EMS is committed to combating gender-based violence.

The Mission Council reaffirmed its commitment to partnership, shared mission, and mutual accountability. Key decisions focused on strengthening cooperation within the EMS fellowship, promoting regional balance, deepening relationships among member churches, and ensuring the sustainable use of human and financial resources.

Furthermore, the Mission Council appointed Dr Fabian Peters, Head of Department for Financial Management and Information Technology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Württemberg, as an advisor to the Mission Council and re-elected the ProPro Committee, which oversees programme and project funding.

YOUTH MEETING IN GERMANY

Former participants of the Ecumenical Volunteers Programme gathered in Frankfurt from 5 to 7 September for a weekend reunion. As the farewell of Rev. Solomon Benjamin, Head of Unit India and East Asia, was scheduled for November 2025, the event provided a special opportunity to bid him farewell in person. The weekend was a great success, offering space for meaningful exchange, learning, and fellowship. Participants shared perspectives on India and East Asia, explored ways to address prejudice during a visit to the Anne Frank Centre, and strengthened their connections with one another. Representatives of the Ecumenical Centre of the Protestant Church in Hesse and Nassau and the Evangelical Church of Kurhessen-Waldeck also joined the gathering for part of the programme.

NO BORDERS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

From 26 to 28 September 2025, EMS, together with the Evangelical Academy Bad Boll and the Kirchliche Arbeitsstelle Südliches Afrika (KASA), hosted the international conference **South Africa and Germany in Solidarity: Walking Together Against Gender-Based Violence**. Bringing together church leaders, activists, youth, and practitioners from both countries, the conference fostered dialogue, learning, and collaboration on addressing gender-based violence (GBV).

Participants explored the structural causes of GBV, including patriarchy, poverty, historical trauma, and digital violence, while sharing effective approaches to survivor support, advocacy, and youth engagement. The conference strengthened international partnerships and renewed a shared commitment to promoting the rights, dignity, and safety of women and girls. Insights from the event will continue to inform awareness-raising and advocacy.

AFFIRMING OUR COMMITMENT TO A CHILD-FRIENDLY CHURCH

From 26 to 28 September 2025, the FRIENDS team facilitated a **Child-Friendly Church** Workshop at the National Annual General Meeting of the Moravian Sunday School Union in South Africa (MSUSA) in Mossel Bay. Led by Boneta Neethling, EMS Programme Support Officer for FRIENDS in the Moravian Church in South Africa (MCSA), the workshop introduced FRIENDS resources and explored the vision of a Child-



Participants in the EMS workshop in South Africa are working together to promote a child-friendly church.

Friendly Church where children are welcomed, valued, and heard.

Representatives from all districts, the National Executive Committee, and children's ministry leaders took part. The workshop concluded with all participants signing a declaration, affirming their commitment to promoting child-friendly congregations across the MCSA.

INDONESIA:
BUILDING SOLIDARITY THROUGH PARTICIPATION AND PARTNERSHIP

The Protestant Church in South-East Sulawesi (GEPSULTRA) hosted the annual EMS regional forum from 2 to 5 October 2025 in Kendari, Indonesia. Under the theme **"Realizing Solidarity Through Concrete Participation in Regional Cooperation,"** church leaders and partners came together to strengthen relationships, exchange experiences, and deepen their shared commitment to mission.

Participants included representatives of the General Synod of Churches in North and Central Sulawesi (SAG Sulutteng), the Communion of Churches in Indonesia, South and Southeast Sulawesi Region (PGIW Sulselra), and the Eastern Indonesia College of Philosophy and Theology (STFT INTIM). The forum showed EMS's growing recognition as a valued platform for collaboration, mutual learning, and joint engagement.



The Regional Forum serves as a platform for consultation and cooperation among the Indonesian EMS member churches.

Churches reaffirmed their commitment to mobilising local resources, strengthening both regional and international cooperation.

FORMER SCHNELLER VOLUNTEERS REUNITE IN STUTTGART

Former volunteers from the Schneller Schools in Jordan and Lebanon met in Stuttgart on 25-26 October 2025 for a reunion organized by the Evangelical Association for the Schneller Schools (EVS). During the EVS General Meeting, they learned more about the association's work and current developments affecting Christians in the Middle East.



Gathering of former volunteers who served at the Schneller Schools, held in Stuttgart.

INTERNATIONAL STUDY PROGRAMMES

Through study programmes at renowned universities in Lebanon, Japan and India, EMS enables students to gain first-hand experience of diverse cultural and faith contexts. These encounters foster intercultural understanding while strengthening awareness of one's own identity and faith.



Jerusalem cityscape.

STUDY IN THE MIDDLE EAST (SIMO)

SiMO is an academic programme for advanced students of theology, religious education, and related fields. Hosted by the Near East School of Theology (NEST) in Beirut, Lebanon, an interconfessional Protestant seminary serving evangelical churches across the Middle East, it offers participants a unique opportunity to engage with the region's religious, cultural, and social realities.

In 2025, SiMO celebrated its 25th anniversary. Since its establishment, more than 80 students have completed an ecumenical year of study at NEST, gaining first-hand insights into the churches, societies, and diverse traditions of the Middle East while developing lasting international and ecumenical networks.

The anniversary coincided with ongoing political and military conflicts in the region. After the 2022/23 programme was ended prematurely because of the impact of the Gaza war on Lebanon, it proved impossible to recruit participants for the 2024/25 and 2025/26 academic years.

Despite these difficulties, the anniversary was marked by a celebration in Erfurt, Germany, and an international consultation involving partners from Germany, Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine. A key outcome was the signing of a joint declaration inspired by the publication **We Choose Abundant Life** (Beirut, 2021). Participants reaffirmed their commitment to fostering peace, reconciliation, and a culture of life in the face of violence, while pledging to explore sustainable ways of continuing the programme under challenging conditions.

INTERRELIGIOUS STUDIES IN JAPAN PROGRAMME (ISJP)

The ISJP, offered at the NCC Center for the Study of Japanese Religions in Kyoto, Japan, provides students from a variety of academic and professional backgrounds with a unique opportunity to engage in the study of religion and interfaith dialogue in the Japanese context.



Study programme participants at Higashi Hongan-ji, one of Kyoto's prominent Buddhist temple complexes.



Worshipping inside St George's Cathedral, Chennai, India.

In 2025, the study programme welcomed two participants from Lund University in Sweden and one participant from Austria, underlining its increasingly international character and its value as a platform for academic exchange and mutual learning. At the same time, the absence of German participants highlights the need to renew efforts to promote the programme more actively among students in Germany.

The annual ISJP Alumni Meeting was held in Frankfurt am Main, Germany, from 24-25 May, bringing together around 20 ISJP participants and alumni. The gathering served as an opportunity to strengthen alumni connections and reflect on the programme's continuing contribution to interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

Over the years, the ISJP has developed a strong and diverse alumni network that continues to enrich dialogue and foster lasting international relationships. Plans for further alumni engagement activities are currently being developed, and a positive response from former participants is expected.

INTERRELIGIOUS STUDY PROGRAMME IN INDIA AT THE HENRY MARTYN INSTITUTE (HMI), HYDERABAD

The Interreligious Study Programme at the HMI in Hyderabad, India, seeks to deepen participants' understanding of the multireligious societies in which they live and serve.

Through interreligious learning and dialogue, the programme encourages participants to reflect on their own faith traditions while fostering greater awareness within their churches of the importance of constructive engagement across religious boundaries.

In October 2025, the first cohort of students began the six-month programme at HMI, an internationally recognised centre for research, interfaith relations, and reconciliation. The six participants represented EMS member churches from Ghana, Indonesia, and South Africa, with two students from each country. Women comprised one-third of the cohort. The programme is implemented through a partnership between EMS, HMI, and the Protestant Church in Hesse and Nassau (EKHN). EKHN provided four full scholarships, while HMI supported the initiative with two additional partial scholarships.

Combining academic study, encounters with diverse faith communities, and shared community life, the programme equips participants with the knowledge, skills, and experience needed to become facilitators of dialogue, builders of peaceful communities, and advocates for justice and reconciliation in their respective contexts.

ecumenical volunteers programme

ECUMENICAL VOLUNTEERS PROGRAMME

The EMS Ecumenical Volunteers Programme promotes intercultural exchange and global solidarity through two complementary pathways.
Participants from Germany can engage in international partner projects through the North-South exchange, while young adults from partner countries contribute their perspectives and experience in Germany through the South-North exchange.
Grounded in the principles of mutual learning, partnership, and respect, they foster intercultural understanding and strengthen relationships between churches and communities worldwide.



North-South volunteers celebrating the successful completion of their service programme.

NORTH-SOUTH VOLUNTEERS

In 2025, fourteen young people from Germany successfully completed their placements in EMS member churches and partner institutions around the world. One volunteer withdrew during the preparation phase and did not begin her service.

For the first time, two volunteers served at the Capron Hall Higher Secondary School for Girls of the Church of **South India** (CSI) in Madurai, where they supported students with homework and organised recreational activities. Two further volunteers were placed at the CSI's Elwin Centre, a long-standing EMS partner institution. **Jordan** remained a significant destination for the programme. Volunteers served at the Theodor Schneller School in Amman and, after a long interruption, the Holy Land Institute for the Deaf in Salt once again welcomed two volunteers. They helped with boarding school activities and the care of children and young people. Owing to the ongoing political tensions in the Middle East, the volunteers returned to Germany earlier than planned.

In **Ghana**, one volunteer contributed to the Presbyterian Church of Ghana's environmental education programmes in Accra.

In **Indonesia**, two volunteers supported the work of a kindergarten and congregation of the Toraja Mamasa Church and assisted at a centre for children and young people with disabilities. Another volunteer served at a children's home in Blimbingsari, Bali, where she organised leisure activities and provided homework support.

Further placements took volunteers to the Asian Rural Institute in **Japan** and to the Presbyterian Church of **Korea** in Seoul.

Following their return, the volunteers gathered in Stuttgart for an evaluation seminar to reflect on their experiences and share insights from their year abroad. Meanwhile, preparations for the next cohort continued. After completing preparatory seminars in Stuttgart, most new volunteers departed for their placements in September 2025.

SOUTH-NORTH VOLUNTEERS

A total of ten volunteers came to Germany in 2025, marking the highest number of participants since the programme was restructured into a one-year voluntary service supported by Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) weltwärts programme.

As in previous years, visa application procedures posed challenges and led to some delays in arrival. Nevertheless, all participants could begin and successfully complete their voluntary service.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in **Württemberg** hosted four volunteers. Two, from South Africa and Korea, served at the Schillerstraße Family Centre in Heilbronn, supporting the kindergarten and its daily activities. A Ghanaian volunteer served in a parish in Ulm, helping with a wide range of programmes and initiatives. This was the first time this placement had been filled. In addition, an Indian volunteer served in the nursery run by the Grossheppach Sisters' Community near Stuttgart.

In the Protestant Church in **Baden**, a South African volunteer supported a kindergarten and assisted with parish activities.

Two further South Africans served with the Moravian Church in their centre at Herrnhaag, contributing to various aspects of community life.

In the Protestant Church of Kurhessen-Waldeck, an Indian volunteer supported a parish in **Kassel**, including coordinating the local food bank. Another volunteer from Ghana was involved in youth work and helped organise projects and confirmation camps at the ecumenical community in Himmelsfels.

A Korean volunteer served in a parish of the Church in **Hesse** and Nassau (EKHN), where her work also helped strengthen the partnership between the EKHN and the Presbyterian Church of Korea.

The group's evaluation seminar is planned for February 2026, shortly before the volunteers return to their home churches.

During her stay in Germany, Anesteen from South Africa joined the brass ensemble of her host congregation in Heilbronn.



Some of the South-North volunteers visited the ecumenical community of Taizé.



ECUMENICAL CO-WORKERS

A significant milestone was reached in 2025 with the successful deployment of two ecumenical co-workers to the Moravian Church of South Africa (MCSA). Following lengthy recruitment efforts and visa procedures, Rev. George Larbi of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG) and Rev. Anugerah Lindawati of the Christian Protestant Church in Bali (GKPB), Indonesia, started their ministries in South Africa. Although both appointments were scheduled to begin on 1 April 2025, Rev. Lindawati's arrival was slightly delayed due to visa processing requirements. Both co-workers were appointed for three-year terms extending until 31 March 2028.

Their deployment stands for an important achievement at a time when filling ecumenical co-worker positions has become increasingly challenging, as suitable candidates are often difficult to find and recruit. While the two positions in the MCSA were successfully filled, the ecumenical co-worker position designated for service from Germany in the PCG remained vacant during the reporting period. The appointments of Rev. Larbi and Rev. Lindawati demonstrate the continued commitment of EMS member churches to sharing ministries and strengthening international partnerships through ecumenical cooperation.



Thatched-roof church of the MCSA in Elim, Western Cape Province.

Rev. George Larbi (top),
Rev. Anugerah Lindawati (centre and bottom).



Expressing faith creatively: Young people taking part in a "Praise and Paint" workshop of the MCSA.

PROJECTS AND PROGRAMMES IN THE EMS FELLOWSHIP

Guided by the EMS fellowship's vision of holistic Christian witness, EMS supports selected member programmes and projects worldwide. We foster mutual sharing of gifts, resources and responsibilities among churches and mission societies, affirming equal partnerships in God's mission where all contribute, all receive, and all participate together.

PROJECT EXAMPLE: EVANGELISATION AND THEOLOGICAL TRAINING

SOUTH AFRICA: EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH FAITH, LEADERSHIP AND OPPORTUNITY

South Africa's young people are growing up in the face of immense challenges. High unemployment, limited economic opportunities, mental health pressures, substance abuse, and social exclusion leave many feeling uncertain about the future. At the same time, many young people are drifting away from church life because they do not see their realities, questions, and aspirations reflected in traditional ministry approaches.

To respond to this urgent need, the Moravian Church in South Africa (MCSA) established the Youth Desk in 2025. Its vision is simple but transformative: to help young people encounter Christ, develop their leadership potential, and become active contributors to both church and society. The programme serves young people aged 17-35 through a holistic ministry that nurtures spiritual growth while addressing social, economic, and personal development needs.

A major milestone in 2025 was the creation of a national youth ministry structure. Seven trained coordinators now provide leadership across theological, social, economic, and ecological portfolios and support youth ministry throughout the country. A national youth survey and awareness campaign also helped identify the needs and aspirations of young people, ensuring that ministry activities are shaped by their lived realities.

THE PRAISE AND PAINT PROGRAMME: A NEW APPROACH TO EVANGELISATION

One of the Youth Desk's most successful initiatives was the launch of **Praise and Paint**, an innovative evangelisation programme that combines worship, biblical reflection, discussion, testimony, and creative arts. Implemented in eight of the church's ten districts, it reached nearly 500 young people in 2025. **Praise and Paint** created safe and welcoming spaces where young people could explore faith, build relationships, and express themselves creatively. The programme proved especially effective in reconnecting youth who had disengaged from traditional church activities. Participants reported increased confidence, stronger communication skills, deeper faith, and a renewed sense of belonging.

One participant shared, "The programme helped me to navigate my role inside and outside the church." Another reflected, "It brought people together and helped people connect with each other and with God."

These results show the powerful impact of investing in young people. With continued support, the MCSA can expand this ministry, reach more young people, and **nurture a new generation of faith-filled leaders who will strengthen both their communities and the church for years to come.**

PROJECT FUNDING ALLOCATION: 39,309 €

PROJECT EXAMPLE: DIAKONIA, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

INDIA: FROM STIGMA TO HOPE, STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY HEALTH IN PUNJAB



The Church of North India promotes better health among families through focused educational outreach.

Punjab faces a growing HIV/AIDS challenge, with rising new infections linked to drug use, stigma, and limited access to healthcare. Amritsar district remains among the most affected areas.

The Diocesan Community Health Programme, implemented by the Diocese of Amritsar of the Church of North India, supports vulnerable communities in Punjab's Indo-Pak border region by addressing HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis (TB), addiction, and barriers to healthcare. The programme focuses on Dalit communities, women, children, youth, and low-income families.

Using a holistic and community-based approach, the programme combines diakonia, education, and training to improve access to prevention, testing, treatment, and care. Counselling, home visits, medical referrals, and awareness campaigns help reduce stigma, promote healthy behaviours, and strengthen treatment adherence. The 2025 evaluation found that trust-building, door-to-door outreach, partnerships with local leaders, and collaboration with healthcare providers were key factors in increasing service uptake and community participation.

RESTORING HOPE AND HEALTH FOR A VULNERABLE FAMILY

Mrs. Shamma, a 35-year-old widow and mother of three, was identified through the programme's outreach activities after her husband died of an HIV-related illness. Soon afterwards, she learned that she was also HIV-positive.

Programme staff provided counselling, facilitated HIV testing, and supported her family throughout the process. While Mrs. Shamma tested positive, her three children tested negative. Initially fearful of stigma and reluctant to begin treatment, she received ongoing counselling, treatment education, and home-based support that enabled her to start and adhere to antiretroviral therapy (ART).

Today, Mrs. Shamma is in stable health, earning an income to support her family, and ensuring her children remain in school. Her story demonstrates the programme's impact: **connecting vulnerable individuals to life-saving treatment, reducing stigma, strengthening resilience, and helping families move from crisis to stability and hope.**

PROJECT FUNDING ALLOCATION: 9,842 €

PROJECT EXAMPLE: COMBATING POVERTY

INDONESIA: SUPPORTING TUGUTIL SELF-DETERMINATION AND RESILIENCE

The Tugutil (Tobelo Dalam) are an indigenous forest-dwelling community in the remote interior of Halmahera, North Maluku, Indonesia. They face multiple forms of poverty linked not only to limited income, but also to social exclusion, environmental vulnerability, and restricted access to essential services. Their dependence on forest resources for food, medicine, shelter, and livelihoods makes them particularly vulnerable to environmental degradation and shrinking hunting areas, e.g. through logging or mining activities. Many community members also lack civil registration documents, limiting access to healthcare, education, government programs, and legal protections.

In response, the Evangelical Christian Church in Halmahera (GMIH) worked alongside Tugutil communities to strengthen resilience, support community organization, and improve access to opportunities and services.

SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS AND ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Training sessions introduced sustainable resource management practices and explored forest-compatible livelihood options. These activities aimed to strengthen the community's capacity to respond to environmental and economic challenges while protecting traditional ways of life. Environmental education promoted biodiversity conservation, water protection, and responsible use of natural resources, **helping safeguard the forests that are central to Tugutil well-being and food security.**



The Tugutil maintain a traditional way of life centred on hunting, gathering, and living in harmony with nature.

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY CAPACITY

Through workshops and seminars involving around 60 participants, the project supported leadership development, community organization, and knowledge sharing. These efforts strengthened local capacities and social networks, enabling community members to address challenges collectively and engage more effectively with external stakeholders.

IMPROVING ACCESS AND INCLUSION

Community assessments highlighted widespread barriers to civil documentation and public services. By documenting these challenges and raising awareness, the project established a basis for future advocacy to improve access to healthcare, education, and government support.

A significant achievement was reducing social isolation. Through sustained engagement, approximately 25 Tugutil families and clans strengthened their connections with church networks and local support structures. Greater inclusion has expanded access to information, services, and opportunities, contributing to the community's long-term resilience and self-determination.

PROJECT FUNDING ALLOCATION: 26,923 €

PROJECT EXAMPLE:
COMMITMENT TO JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION
JAPAN: ADVANCING HUMAN RIGHTS AND INCLUSION FOR MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

Buraku people are descendants of historically marginalized communities in Japan whose ancestors were associated with occupations once considered ritually impure under the feudal system. Although legal discrimination was abolished more than 150 years ago, prejudice and social exclusion continue to affect some Buraku people in areas such as employment, marriage, housing, and social relationships.

The Buraku Liberation Center (BLC) of the United Church of Christ in Japan (UCCJ) continued its mission in 2025 to **combat discrimination, promote human rights, and build inclusive communities**. While rooted in the struggle against discrimination faced by Buraku communities, the Center also advocates for the rights and dignity of other marginalized groups, including migrants, people with disabilities, women, and sexual minorities. Grounded in a Christian vision of a society in which all people can live in peace and dignity, the BLC combines education, advocacy, and dialogue to challenge prejudice, deepen mutual understanding, and contribute to social reconciliation.



Shinto shrine: Shintoism and Buddhism shape the lives of many people in Japan, while Christians constitute only a small minority.

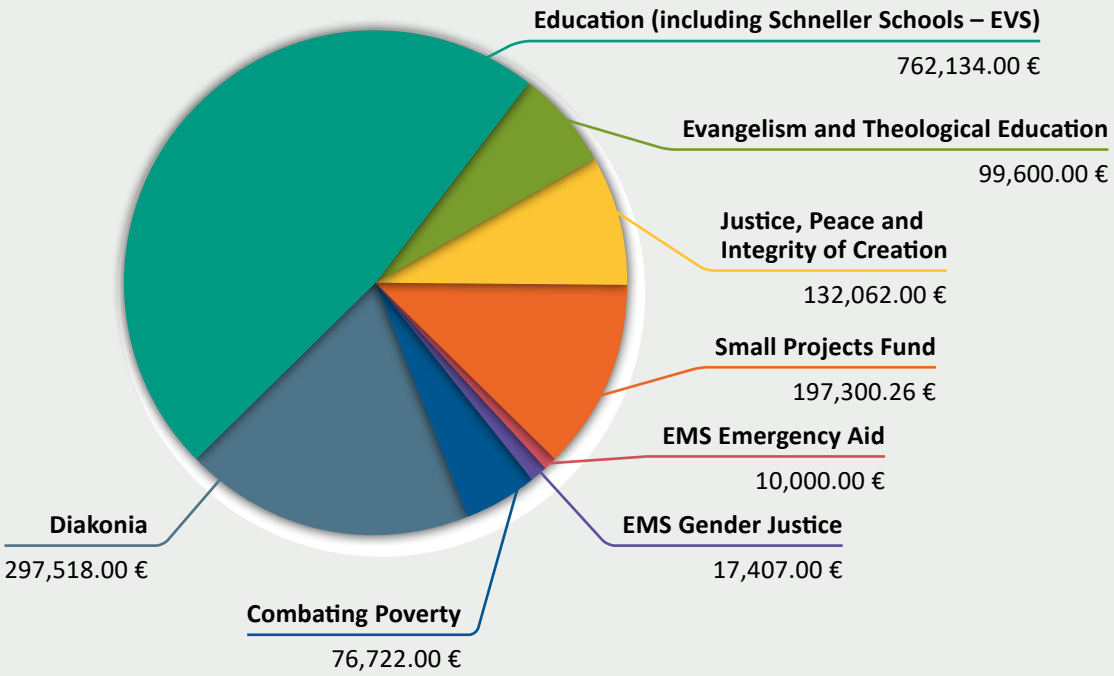
ADVOCATING EQUAL TREATMENT UNDER THE LAW

A prominent example of the Center's advocacy is its support for a retrial in the Sayama Incident, a case regarded by supporters as a symbol of structural discrimination against Buraku people. In 1963, Kazuo Ishikawa, a young man from a Buraku community, was convicted of murder. The BLC and numerous human rights advocates have long argued that the investigation and trial were shaped by discriminatory stereotypes and procedural shortcomings, and they continue to call for a full judicial review of the case.

For the Center, the Sayama Incident highlights broader concerns about **equal treatment under the law and the protection of the rights of marginalized communities**. Through public education campaigns, newsletters, rallies, ecumenical gatherings, and awareness-raising events, the BLC continues to draw attention to the case. In doing so, it uses the Sayama Incident not only as a campaign for justice, but also as a powerful educational tool to confront prejudice, raise awareness of discrimination, and promote respect for human rights.

PROJECT FUNDING ALLOCATION: 6,163 €

PRIORITIES OF OUR FUNDING



FUNDING AND DONATIONS

WALDENSIAN CHURCH CONTINUES SUPPORT FOR EMS PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS

The three-year agreement providing annual support of €300,000 from the Waldensian Evangelical Church (through the Italian Otto per Mille funding system) for programmes and projects in the EMS fellowship concluded at the end of 2024. Building on twelve years of successful cooperation, EMS and the Waldensian Church reached a new agreement that will continue this annual contribution through 2027. This renewed commitment not only ensures sustained financial support for the work of EMS member churches but also further strengthens a long-standing partnership that has proven to be both effective and mutually beneficial over more than a decade.

SOLIDARITY THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

The year 2025 was marked by armed conflicts, the impacts of climate change, economic uncertainty, and declining public funding for development cooperation and humanitarian aid. At the same time, global humanitarian needs continued to rise.

In this challenging environment, the solidarity of our donors and supporters remained a vital source of strength. Through their donations and trust, they enabled practical assistance, created opportunities, and supported sustainable development for people and the environment.

We sincerely thank everyone who contributed. Every donation helped strengthen self-reliance and opens new perspectives. Together, we fostered hope, built resilience, and helped shape a more just and sustainable future.



With gospel, jazz and soul, Thulie Zama delighted audiences at benefit concerts for the EMS Foundation.

EMS FOUNDATION MISSION IN PARTNERSHIP

EMS FOUNDATION BENEFIT CONCERT TOUR

From 1 to 17 May, EMS organised and accompanied a series of benefit concerts for the EMS Foundation featuring South African singer Thulile Zama. The tour included ten concerts as well as performances in church services.

The concert tour was met with a very positive response across all venues and audience groups. This success was largely due to Thulile Zama's outstanding professionalism, musical excellence, and warm engagement with local communities. Host congregations mobilised many volunteers who generously provided technical support and hospitality free of charge, showing strong local ownership and commitment. A particular highlight was the participation of local choirs, which Thulile Zama integrated seamlessly into her performances without extensive rehearsals. Their involvement not only enriched the concerts but also contributed significantly to attracting audiences.

Overall, the tour reached more than 1,000 people and raised €9,400 for the EMS Future Fund, while strengthening connections in the EMS fellowship through music, cultural exchange, and shared commitment to EMS's mission.

ERNST AUGUST HESSE FOUNDATION

The establishment of the Ernst August Hesse Foundation under the umbrella of the EMS Foundation honours the life's work of Rev. Ernst August Hesse (1955-2018). Initiated by his family, this subsidiary foundation supports projects and educational programmes that reflect his core commitments: justice, peace, and the integrity of creation. In doing so, it continues Hesse's wide-ranging engagement in pastoral care, ecumenism, environmental and peace work, and support for people in need, while also strengthening the sustainable project work of EMS.



Ulrike Schmidt-Hesse, founder of the Ernst-August-Hesse Foundation, and Ute Kauffmann, General Manager of EMS (from left).

GOVERNANCE

Three key policy documents were adopted during an extraordinary online meeting of delegates to the EMS General Meeting on 1 December 2025.

REVISED SAFEGUARDING POLICY

EMS adopted a revised Safeguarding Policy to strengthen accountability and the protection of all individuals involved in EMS activities. The policy applies to staff, volunteers, committee members, programme participants, and partners, and promotes safe, respectful, and inclusive working environments across the EMS fellowship.

The policy affirms EMS's zero-tolerance approach to harassment, abuse, sexual exploitation, and the misuse of power. It strengthens guidance on prevention, reporting, and response mechanisms, while emphasizing the shared responsibility to uphold the dignity, safety, and well-being of all people engaged in EMS programmes and activities.

REVISED ANTI-CORRUPTION POLICY

The revised Anti-Corruption Policy reinforces EMS' commitment to integrity, accountability, and responsible resource management. It reflects the shared conviction of EMS member churches and mission societies that corruption undermines peaceful and just societies and that faith-based organizations must exemplify ethical and socially responsible conduct. The policy reaffirms EMS's zero-tolerance stance on corruption, fraud, and misuse of assets while strengthening measures for prevention, reporting, and case management. All reported cases are handled transparently, fairly, and without discrimination, regardless of gender, position, or social background, ensuring consistent accountability across the EMS fellowship.

REVISED EMS POLICY ON FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR PROJECTS AND PROGRAMMES (PROPRO POLICY)

The revised EMS ProPro Policy strengthens the fellowship's commitment to partnership, mutuality, and shared mission. It guides the allocation of financial support to selected programmes and projects of EMS member churches and mission societies worldwide. Grounded in the belief that all members have both gifts to share and needs to be met, the policy promotes relationships of mutual exchange and solidarity. Moving beyond traditional donor-recipient models, it emphasizes equality, trust, and shared responsibility. The policy affirms that all EMS members participate on equal terms and contribute in diverse yet complementary ways to the fellowship's common mission.

A place of safety: Young people at the GKSS student residence in Makassar, Indonesia.



FINANCIAL REVIEW 2025

FINANCIAL POSITION

The 2025 financial year was marked by adjustments in the presentation of the annual financial statements. These changes were based on recommendations from the new external auditors. Future obligations, particularly pension liabilities, are now reported more comprehensively and in greater detail, thereby increasing transparency.

At year-end, EMS continued to maintain a solid asset base of approximately €15.1 million. However, the structure of its equity changed significantly, as long-term pension obligations were recognized for the first time, or to a greater extent, in the balance sheet. This resulted in a reduction of reserves and an increase in provisions. These changes primarily affect the presentation of the balance sheet and do not reflect a deterioration in the organization‘s financial position.

INCOME

In 2025, EMS generated total income of €7.64 million. The main sources of funding were:

- Contributions and allocations from member churches: €4.64 million
- Donations: €1.14 million
- Project grants and third-party funding: €624,000
- Income from asset management: €543,005

Donation income remained almost unchanged from the previous year at approximately €1.14 million. EMS continued to receive substantial support from its member churches, the EMS Foundation, and other partner organizations. Asset management performed positively during the year. Higher interest and dividend income made a significant contribution to the overall result.

EXPENDITURE

Total expenditure amounted to approximately €7.64 million. The largest expense item was personnel costs in Germany, totaling €3.45 million. The increase compared with the previous year was primarily attributable to additional pension obligations as well as collectively agreed salary adjustments and inflation-related increases. Temporarily vacant positions helped to moderate personnel costs.

Approximately €1.8 million was invested in project work and project support. Material and operating expenses amounted to around €1.52 million, while personnel costs abroad totaled approximately €107,000. In addition, depreciation expenses amounted to about €49,000, and €180,000 was allocated to reserves.

ANNUAL RESULT AND OUTLOOK

Income of €7.644 million was offset by expenditure of €7.639 million, resulting in an annual surplus of €5,319, which will be carried forward to 2026. Despite the impact of the revised pension valuation, EMS remained financially sound in 2025. Investments continue to be managed in accordance with the ethical and sustainable investment guidelines of the EKD (Evangelical Church in Germany).

Church tax revenues of the German churches, which finance a substantial portion of the EMS budget, continue to decline. This trend will lead to far-reaching structural changes and ongoing challenges in the years ahead, also for EMS. Against this backdrop, the intention of partners in India and Korea to contribute to staffing costs at the Stuttgart headquarters in the future is an encouraging sign that partnership based on equality and shared responsibility is being put into practice within EMS.

FISCAL YEAR 2025

INCOME

Donations	1,141,506.13
Contributions/allocations from members	4,643,270.14
Third-party funding/other allocations from Germany	307,366.88
Third-party funding/allocations from M21 + Tavola Valdese	316,655.69
Income from asset management	543,005.05
Income from business operations	79,807.65
Reimbursements and other income	613,100.51
7,644,712.05 EUR	

EXPENDITURE

ProPro funding, small grants programme, other project funding	1,829,129.80
Allocations to members	511,933.99
Personnel expenses (Germany)	3,445,134.78
Personnel expenses (abroad)	107,168.06
Material costs and other expenses	1,516,906.82
Depreciation	49,119.94
Allocation to reserves	180,000.00
7,639,393.39 EUR	
Annual Surplus	5,318.66 €

CHURCHES AND MISSIONS IN THE EMS FELLOWSHIP



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)
   Evangelical Lutheran Church in Wuerttemberg (ELK-WUE)
   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

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