

The word of God  
reaches everywhere

Izmir-Konak:  
the birth of a church

Overcoming poverty,  
giving dignity

# Holistic church planting



FOCUS ON  
CHURCH DEVELOPMENT



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Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

Matthew 25,40 (NIV)

## Dear Reader!



When I read some reports from Peru in the last few days, there was also an update from a Quechua congregation. Last year, they lovingly cared for a family whose father was terminally ill. The congregation provided the woman and children with food, helped with the household and supported all the family through pastoral care and prayer. Now the father has passed away and is already in the presence of God. The congregation continues to stand by the family.

When Jesus talks about the end of the world, he makes it clear that compassionate service to people is service to him. That is why the church’s mission is to help people in practical ways and to proclaim the gospel to them.

In this issue of our magazine, we report on how this is happening around the world.

In Argentina, for example, the church provides water for the local area and invites people to get to know Jesus as the source of life. Jeremiah, a student of theology, organizes children’s services and helps with school supplies. In India, social initiatives bring hope and a sense of purpose to the lives of young and old in the church communities.

Building holistic churches – this is not just a value that we at EBM INTERNATIONAL have written down on paper, it is something we live. I invite you to discover the different facets of this in this issue, how social engagement and the invitation to faith go hand in hand. Because as a global church, we can help to bring God’s eternal perspective to people and experience how the hope of faith has a healing effect on life in the here and now and releases new strength to find a way out of adversity.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue and wish you a blessed Easter.

*Michael Fischbeck*

*Team Leader, Public Relations and Fundraising*



Please feel free to send us your feedback, suggestions or requests regarding the current magazine: [www.ebm-international.org/feedback](http://www.ebm-international.org/feedback)



### WHO WE ARE

EBM INTERNATIONAL, founded in 1954 as the European Baptist Mission, works with 30 Baptist member unions and partners on four continents. As a mission organization, we share God’s transforming love in about 300 projects so that people can live in hope.

In our global partnership with local Baptist churches, together we call upon Christ to bring

justice, renewal and hope to the world. We are committed to achieving this goal on the basis of equality through sharing and learning, giving and receiving.

More information on our website:  
[www.ebm-international.org/en/about-us](http://www.ebm-international.org/en/about-us)

# Impenetrable and extensive – yet God’s Word reaches

Whether by moped through the undergrowth or by car through lonely expanses – in Argentina, the distances are long and the challenges are many. However, missionary work knows no bounds. Julia-Kathrin Raddek provides insights into four regions of Argentina and tells the stories of passionate women and men for whom no distance is too far to introduce people to the love of God.

## Patagonia – mission in lonely expanses

In Argentina’s southernmost region, the weather is unpredictable. It can pour with rain one minute and be gloriously sunny ten minutes later. Sometimes you can experience all four seasons in a single day. With just 2.5 inhabitants per square kilometer, loneliness is a palpable feeling. However, the freedom of the wide open spaces is enticing. Those who want to make this place their home must like it and choose it consciously.

More than 30 years ago, Noemí and Pedro Boretsky did just that. Since then, missionary work among the indigenous Mapuche people has been unimaginable without them. They are still amazed at what has grown since they first started in and around *Esquel* where the first church was built in 1991. And they are not alone. Within a radius of 350 km, there are four other locations that belong to the missionary work. Everywhere, full-time and volunteer workers are committed to helping people. But the circumstances are not easy. The climate is harsh and the locals are often unapproachable. It takes a long time to build relationships.

The colorful church life focuses on people and their needs. One area of emphasis is school support. The Argentinean education system has been suffering for many years from strikes, a shortage of teachers, poor pay, and dilapidated buildings. Some children have to travel long distances to get to school. In the churches, teams have been formed to help schoolchildren in small groups with their studies. Some want to go to university and have dreams. Others see no prospects for themselves. They lack appreciation and appropriate support. The volunteers give them just that.

For several years, the suicide rate among young people has been particularly high. The hardship is great, life is unbearable. That is why the churches have launched an initiative: Your life is valuable! On the annual day of prevention and beyond, they are making the topic of suicide visible in society. In this way, the learning spaces also become spaces of protection and hope.

The Boretskys regularly travel long distances to visit all these people and places. They want to know how the work is going and how the people are doing. No distance is too far for them!

## Mendoza – a social center for the people

1,500 km further north along the Andes is the city of Mendoza. It is one of three green oases in the province of the same name. For over 25 years, the social center in the *Doce de Mayo* district has been a beacon of light for the population. The everyday life of the residents is marked by existential struggles. The social center is providing social welfare services for these people. Miriam Pizzi, a passionate social worker and the center’s director, has been involved in the district’s work for a long time. Many children come during the day. They receive support with their studies and can take advantage of creative or sporting activities. The girls and boys receive a meal and are protected from the unpredictable life on the street.

## El Impenetrable – Impervious and yet reachable

Further northeast, we arrive at the Gran Chaco, the hottest region in Argentina. The landscape is partly barren and partly inaccessible. In *El Impenetrable*, an area of more than 40,000 km<sup>2</sup>, the land is covered by trees, shrubs and cacti. Endangered species such as the jaguar thrive there.





# everywhere



**Educational support in Patagonia**

But for the approximately 60,000 people who live there, the roads – mostly unpaved – are difficult to travel. Most of the inhabitants belong to the indigenous Wichí people. Their living conditions are often precarious. There are hardly any sanitary facilities. Many suffer from malnutrition.

Since 1996, the Baptist church in Miraflores has been located there. It reaches about 15 other places in the area with its work. Even as a new convert, Pastor Roberto Gil had a heart for the Wichí. He repeatedly dreamt of a hut in one of their villages. But he didn't know where that was, because there are many settlements in the national park.

Soon after, four Wichí men knocked on his door and asked him to come with them and preach the word of God to them. This call is still alive today and since then the work among the Wichí has expanded. Roberto Gil is still there too. Together with his wife, he and many other co-workers are responsible for the church work in Miraflores and the outlying areas. They regularly visit all the places, sometimes driving many hundreds of kilometers to do so. They organize youth meetings, evangelistic campaigns, baptisms, renovations or the construction of new pastor's houses – vibrant congregational life everywhere.

Due to the heat, the Gran Chaco is repeatedly hit by periods of drought, during which rivers, ponds and dams dry up. This hits the poor population hard, because they don't have running water. For many years, the churches have been helping to build wells throughout the region. This is a laborious task: drilling holes, connecting pumps, building pipes. In addition, wooden structures are built to install huge tanks at a height of 3.5 meters. These are filled with water and people come with canisters and jugs to get water. The water of life can be experienced here in the most literal sense.

This is how Christians understand their faith: providing others with access to the source of life, which bubbles up freely for everyone without end. In this way, they work in the cities and villages and introduce people to the transforming love of God.

### **Misiones – where the name says it all**

At the border of Paraguay and Brazil lies the province of Misiones, also known as Tierra Colorada, or “Red Earth,” because the soil has a reddish-brown color. This northeastern province is the size of Belgium, and 35 percent of the land is covered with rainforest. Overall, it is humid here, with many rivers flowing through the country. In Misiones, Oscar Kunigk and his wife Alicia coordinate the →







in the other regions of Argentina.

→ missionary work in four locations in Alto Uruguay (the border river with Uruguay and Brazil): Bernardo de Irigoyen, Dos de Mayo, El Soberbio and Puerto Rico. When Oscar sets out to visit the brothers and sisters, the distances are not quite as far for him as



Oscar Kunigk with those to be baptized

The proximity to Ijuí, Brazil, enables close cooperation with the theological seminary there. Students regularly come to Misiones to address young people in particular with a creative evangelism program. This is a valuable enrichment.

The work in Puerto Rico is the most recent in Alto Uruguay. Here the brothers and sisters still meet in private homes until a suitable location can be found. The search is challenging. Since the country is so sparsely populated, there is no real central location that is easily accessible for everyone.

Pastor Sergio Valdez runs and coordinates the CEFOLÍ program (Centro de Formacion de Líderes = Center for Leadership Training) from the Baptist Theological Institute in Oberá. The program is used by leaders and missionaries throughout Argentina and consists of two modules, each with 12 thematic units. The content is very diverse and serves to qualify local leaders. Each person works through the material independently. Then groups are organized locally and meet to share

their experiences. Each unit concludes with an exam. For this, the examiners sometimes travel long distances to the participants. On average, this training takes two to three years.

**Holistic mission**

At all locations, missionary-evangelistic activities are interwoven with outreach social work and practical service to people. Going there, listening, opening eyes, hearts and hands. Doing what is necessary and, trusting in God, expecting the impossible. In this way, the brothers and sisters in Argentina live what Jesus himself said: “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” Matthew 25,40 (NIV)

by Julia-Kathrin Raddek



Mendoza – great joy over new caps

# Aurélia's journey from doubt to faith

In Cuba, we support house churches, Bible clubs and sports programs. In addition, women and men are trained to found new churches. All of these initiatives share the Good News and invite people to believe in Jesus Christ. In economically challenging times, neighbors receive practical support and emotional comfort. Aurelia (name changed) also found a supportive community.

## Practical help and the good news

Aurelia's parents are blind and cannot see their daughter being baptized, but they hear the joy in her voice and feel the water drops from the paddling pool. The church in Zaldo, Havana, celebrates with them. In Cuba, where the economy has collapsed and many have left the country, the church remains an important source of support. It offers health advice, medication and support for senior citizens and children. Women do the hair of senior citizens and offer manicures. Aurelia is one of these volunteers.

Aurelia grew up in an atheist family, but occasionally practised the Yoruba religion. A schoolmate gave her a Bible, but after school she lost contact with him. Ten years later, she met her husband, whose family members were Christians. She began attending church services and finally found

her faith in the church in Zaldo. Her fears disappeared, her self-confidence grew and she finally felt at home. Her parents now also attend the service.

## Promoting holistic church ministry

Also in other countries in Latin America, Africa, and Turkey, EBM INTERNATIONAL supports more than 100 projects in the area of church development.

In Africa, for example, we train pastors in Cameroon, Zambia, and Malawi and support church planters in their own country. Our brothers and sisters in Turkey invite people to their church services, take care of refugees, and seek contact with people.



Aurelia found faith, was baptized and is now volunteering at the church.

## During our Easter campaign, we are asking for support for holistic work in churches and theological training:

**25  
EUROS**

cover the costs of an aid package that a Turkish church can use to provide for a family and give them hope.

**55  
EUROS**

enable a person to attend a pastors' conference in Zambia that strengthens their faith and equips them for their ministry.

**100  
EUROS**

finance the annual subsidy for a Bible student at the Youth Island Theological Seminary in Cuba.

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[www.ebm-international.org/spenden](http://www.ebm-international.org/spenden)

Thank you for your gifts and prayers!



## Izmir-Konak: the birth of a church

Located on the Gulf of Izmir, Konak is a vibrant place. This district is popular with locals and tourists alike, as it is home to the cultural center of the city of Izmir. The ruins of the ancient city of Smyrna can also be found here. It is a perfect place for a young Baptist church. Pastor Mert Baydoğan reports on how an idea born out of love has grown into a group that is now looking for a suitable space to live out Christian community.

### Mert, where did the idea come from to found a new church?

The idea of planting a church in Konak emerged as we saw the spiritual need in the heart of the city. Konak is a central hub for culture, education and trade in Izmir, attracting people from all sectors of society. Over the years, I sensed God calling me to reach out to



Pastor Mert Baydoğan

this diverse community with the gospel. After much prayer and consultation with my home church (editor's note: the Baptist church in Izmir-Buca under the leadership of Ertan Çevik), we decided to take the first steps towards founding a new church in this area.

### What did these steps look like in practice?

The process of starting a new church was a gradual one. It began with reaching out to people in the area, listening to their questions and having

conversations about the Bible. At the same time, finding a suitable place for regular meetings was an important priority.

As people became more interested, we began to run more detailed Bible studies with those who wanted to learn more. Over time, a small core group formed for worship and fellowship. The focus was on creating a welcoming environment where people could freely explore their faith.

Of course, this is an ongoing process – it takes time to build relationships, reach out to people and strengthen the community. But the most important first steps were personal contacts, establishing a meeting place and organizing regular gatherings.

### Where do you meet?

Currently, we use a municipal building for our meetings, which is available to us once a month. We would like to use an Orthodox church nearby, where we have been guests a few times. Although it would be a dream to have it as a permanent meeting place, it remains just a dream for now. We pray and trust that God will support us in our search for a permanent location.

### What is the background of the people who belong to the newly founded church?

The members of the church come from very different backgrounds. Some are young students, others are professionals or families. Some were already Christians before they joined the church, while others came to faith through our outreaches. Many of them have come to know us through our Bible seminars or personal contacts with the church.

### What are your responsibilities as a pastor?

As a pastor, I focus on preaching, teaching, counseling, and discipleship. I also lead our baptism preparation classes and facilitate online Bible seminars. In addition, I am involved in the worship ministry, outreaches, and the administration of the church plant. It is a diversified role, but I am grateful for the opportunity to serve in so many areas.

### What is your vision for the church in Konak?

My vision is that the church in Konak would be a vibrant, Christ-centered community where people from all backgrounds encounter God, grow in their faith, and share the gospel. I want it to be a place of hope, love, and service that reaches the city in practical and spiritual ways.

### What challenges do you face?

According to official statistics, 99 percent of Turkey's population is Muslim. While a large part of this majority follows their religion more as a cultural tradition, belonging to a different faith and especially leading a Christian church as a pastor can sometimes be challenging. Often, you feel like an apple tree in an orchard full of orange trees. Being different always comes with difficulties, whether in terms of social acceptance or practical obstacles.

Another major challenge we face is the current economic situation in Turkey. Due to extremely high inflation, it has become very difficult to find a regular place for worship. The premises that fit into our budget are often not available at the weekend, as they are usually commercial or day-rental rooms. On the other hand, the rental



prices for rooms that are available at the weekend are far beyond our financial means, making it almost impossible to pay them. This poses a major challenge when we want to ensure that our church has a permanent place for meetings and services.

Despite all these difficulties, we are doing our best to create a place where our community can come together and freely express its faith. Overcoming these challenges strengthens our faith and brings us even closer together as a spiritual family.

**What are you happy about when you think back on the past year?**

I am grateful for the contacts we have made with so many people who are curious about the Christian faith. It

is always a joy to see how lives are changed by the gospel, even if they are only small changes. I am also grateful for the support and encouragement we have received from other churches and partners such as EBM INTERNATIONAL.

**Thank you for the insights into your work!**

**The Dream Church**



**View of the skyline of Izmir from the historic elevator (Asansor) in the Konak district**



## Three students are living their calling

Since 2022, Pastor Christina Döhning is supporting the theological education in Sierra Leone. She teaches at the Evangelical College for Theology (TECT), holds block seminars at the Baptist Theology Seminary (BTS) and at national meetings. She preaches, supports musical services and has become a mentor and pastor for many students. She lives on the campus in Jui with her husband Ralf and their son Nathanael. The Döhning family shares stories from the lives of three young people they are mentoring.

### Maxwell the Evangelist

It is exciting and interesting for us to meet young students and to hear their stories, concerns, needs, dreams and desires.

One of Christina's students is Maxwell. He is in his final year of theology and is also spokesman for the student body. He has a passionate heart for Jesus and evangelism. In addition to his studies, he works as a pastor in a free church in the capital, Freetown, called "Mount Zion Church". Ralf regularly picks him up on his way to get Nathanael from school and drops Maxwell off at his church.

As soon as the rainy season is over, Maxwell organizes several evangelistic meetings lasting several days a month – always in different districts of Freetown and the surrounding area – wherever God puts it on his heart or wherever he is invited. "People rarely come to a church," says Maxwell, "but

if an event takes place in the open air, they stop by!"

To do this, he talks to the local churches and their leaders in advance to invite them to work together. Some of them agree. Maxwell looks for a large open space that can be rented in advance. With a small team, he organizes chairs, a stage, and technical equipment – sound system and lighting – often at his own expense. Nevertheless, Maxwell always emphasizes the importance of the surrounding churches so that new converts can find a spiritual home afterwards. He evangelizes, and then moves on.

The rented chairs, stage and technical equipment are set up every day. The program is quite simple: worship – sermon – prayer and blessing. He has a sonorous, deep voice and follows the guidance of the Holy Spirit in what he says. In this way, he touches many hearts.

In the first evangelistic meeting after the rainy season, between 400 and 800 people gathered each evening. Some received Christ, others asked for prayer, and many are now living their lives with Jesus. Deliverance ministry is a natural part of this. In a deeply occult country like this, evil is visibly present. Even healings are taking place, such as disabled people are able to walk again. God is using Maxwell in an impressive way. Despite all this, he remains modest.

### Jeremiah: A heart for children in need

Jeremiah is one of Christina's students – high-performing, disciplined, reliable and helpful.

He accompanied her on a trip to the provinces when she was traveling by public transport. Jeremiah also cuts Ralf's hair and cleans our solar panels every two weeks. He doesn't want anything in return: "You do so much for us here – including for me, like supplying food to the student residences, and I just want to do something good for you without getting anything in return!"

Every now and then, he talks about his vision of helping children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. He has already started doing this. He seeks out neglected girls and boys in his neighborhood and spends time with them. He invites them to his church, teaches them, tells them Bible stories and takes time for them. When he has money, he buys simple things like school supplies or sweets to help and encourage them. Muslim children are also there.

During these children's programs, they all practice short scenes or dance performances together and present them →



Maxwell talks about faith





Christina Döhring with Jeremiah





**Pastor Mabinty with her husband**

→ to their parents and the church. This vision is what drives him. This is what his missionary work shall be later on: changing people's lives so that they overcome difficulties and find a plan for their lives! Thus he has already started with what God has put on his heart. Jeremiah is doing this with the knowledge of his church, which unfortunately has very little to support him financially. But his church is grateful for the ministry and the people he reaches through it.

As an encouragement for his help, we sent him some children's books and some money. "Use it for your children or for yourself – whatever you want to do with it!" Recently, he showed us a few pictures and videos of what has been achieved: some food, but even more school supplies. This is to help the parents, who can hardly afford pens or notebooks. It's great to see and hear what a difference even small things can make.

Recently, we were able to pass on a whole bag of children's clothes to several families with children on the campus, in the church and in the neighborhood. Clothing is something special here – because all the money is needed for food and other living expenses and rarely is anything left over. Some of the families were over the moon. We were able to give Jeremiah two larger bags for his children.

#### **Mabinty: brave wherever God puts her**

Mabinty is a pastor in the Baptist Convention of Sierra Leone and is now, after years of professional experience, a student of Christina. We have known her for quite a while. She started out working as a pastor in a village. Since you can't make a living from parish work alone, she also had a responsible position at the village school.

Her church was a thorn in the eye of a number of influential people who did not want to have any Christians in the village. They hatched a perfidious plan: to poison the school lunch so that Pastor Mabinty would be punished for it. However, she caught the child in the act of mixing in the poison. Pastor Mabinty was put under a great deal of pressure during the subsequent interrogations and proceedings, until she decided, after consulting with regional management, to leave the village and the church. We are impressed by her selfless way of not reacting to injustice with revenge or wounded pride. She remained peaceful throughout and asked only where God would have her serve.

At the new location, in a socially deprived area, she has founded a Christian pre-school and primary school for the children of the neighborhood. Many parents have no money for school. But education is important and brings hope. Now, 80 children are able to go to school. There they learn to read, write and do arithmetic among other things, and hear about Jesus.

Many Muslim children hear there for the first time that there is a God who loves them and wants good things for their lives. Mabinty has also founded a small church in the school building for the children and their parents. She lives with her family in a few rooms of the school building until she can afford her own home.

There are many challenges that the pastor has to face. There are frequent burglaries. Money for teacher salaries is often lacking at the end of the month. Envious people begrudge her what she has and actively work against her. Construction workers who are supposed to be doing renovation work help themselves to building materials and disappear with them instead of finishing the job. In this rather patriarchal culture, it is not easy for a woman to hold a leading position. We admire the courage and persistence with which Pastor Mabinty does what God puts at her feet. She knows that she is safe in God and empowered to build his new world. The school is growing and has a good reputation in the area.

It is a joy to experience people like Maxwell, Jeremiah and Mabinty. People whom God has gifted and called to be used in exactly the right place.

*based on reports by Ralf and Christina Döhring*

These and other impressions from Sierra Leone can be found on the blog of the Döhring family:

[www.revsierra.com](http://www.revsierra.com)



# NEWS

News, dates and information about our missionary work

## Bolivia: Congratulations on graduating

In Bolivia, EBM INTERNATIONAL is supporting 25 theology students. They are being prepared for their service in churches and in missions at four locations. In Oruro, two of them were able to celebrate their graduation. We wish them God's blessings for the future!



## New: WhatsApp channel

Recently, we have started sharing prayer requests and information about our missionary work on our WhatsApp channel. If you access this link with your smartphone, you can view and subscribe to our channel with a single click: [www.ebm-international.org/whatsapp](http://www.ebm-international.org/whatsapp)

Unfortunately, we cannot yet be found using the search function for WhatsApp channels.



## EBMI mission meeting on Wednesday, May 28 in Kassel

The annual conference of the German Baptist Union (BEFG) will take place in Kassel over the Ascension weekend. We warmly invite you to our mission meeting in advance of this:

- Date: Wednesday, May 28, 2025
- Time: 4:00 pm reception, 4:30 pm start
- Location: EFG Kassel-West (Kirche im Hof), Friedrich-Ebert-Str. 102, 34119 Kassel

We are planning a small reception, will hear from international guests and their reports from the partner countries, and look forward to fellowship with food and drink.

An informal pre-registration will help us with the preparations so we know how many people wish to attend:

E-mail: [promotion@ebm-international.org](mailto:promotion@ebm-international.org) or telephone: +49 33234 74-441



## Recuperation and sharing – missionary retreat in Malawi

At the Missionaries' Retreat, almost all the missionaries from southern Africa met for four days in Zomba: Karin Schwarz, Margrit and Micha Soppa and Klaus Fiedler.

“Talking to each other, exchanging ideas, a nice trip to the mountains... such a precious time. Later, some of them visited the multilingual Baptist congregation in the refugee camp in Dzaleka near Lilongwe,” said Michael Kisskalt.

## Eight years of serving the cause of hope

*Sarah Bosniakowski has been a missionary in Cameroon since 2017, supporting the “Hospital of Hope” in Garoua as a nurse. Now she is back in Germany. Magloire Kadjo, regional representative for Central Africa, looks back on her service.*

I thank God who continues to call men and women to send them to his mission field. In January 2017, he called Sarah Bosniakowski, a young nurse from Germany, and sent her as a missionary to the Baptist Hospital in Garoua, Cameroon. After the Mission Council in Arnhem, the Netherlands, had confirmed her calling in April 2016.

She first came to Douala and then to Garoua in February 2017. Upon her arrival, she received a warm welcome from the leaders of the Union, from the medical facility and the Baptist Hospital Djamboutou.

### **A volunteer becomes a missionary**

Before Sarah came to Cameroon as a missionary, she first worked as a volunteer in Maroua and Mokong in the far north of Cameroon. That was seven years before, in 2009/2010. Her experience as a volunteer certainly helped her to integrate into the Cameroonian culture, especially the culture of the northern part of the country, which is strongly influenced by Islam and traditional cultures.

She was very sociable, very modest and easy to get along with even in different social settings. These qualities helped her to be accepted quickly and make friends.

### **Working to improve health care for people**

After a few days of orientation, Sarah started her work as a nurse, helping with general medical care, internal medicine, preventive care and administration. She was particularly concerned about women, pregnant women and young mothers. She also helped to protect the population against malaria.

Furthermore, Sarah made significant contributions to the functioning of the hospital: at the request and in collaboration with the head of the pharmacy and the hospital administrator, she introduced a control system to stop the embezzlement of medication. This daily control of the pharmacy's invoices and the supervision of the warehouse remained in her reliable hands until the end. This enabled the hospital to increase its financial income, particularly from the sale of medication.

Thanks to Sarah's commitment, a 44 kVA generator was purchased through donations. This was a major step forward: the numerous problems caused by power cuts in the city disappeared. For almost three years, the generator has helped to store vaccines and provided electricity to the examination laboratory and operating theater.

### **Active in volunteer work and in the church**

Sarah's flexibility and willingness to help other ministries of the Cameroon Baptist Union beyond her duties at the hospital were also remarkable.



**Sarah also took care of the youngest**



**Sarah with husband Elie and daughter Nilah**

She gave some German lessons at the Groupe Scolaire la Victoire, a primary school of the Union. At the request of the headmaster, she also supported the German club at the Collège Baptiste Polyvalent la Grâce together with the subject teachers. Additionally, she gave Bible classes to the youth group at her local church, of which she was a member. She always valued her relationships with people and enjoyed being part of the community.

These qualities, along with her experience as a former volunteer, made her a great support for the young volunteers, especially those from Germany. Sarah helped them to arrive, find their way around the city and integrate into the culture.

### **Wedding in Cameroon**

During the eight years which Sarah spent in Cameroon, there were certainly some unforgettable moments in her life. I am thinking here in particular of her wedding with Elie, a Cameroonian, in October 2017. To the joy of all, their daughter Nilah then was born in Hamburg in 2020, but she grew up in Garoua and took her first steps here.

### **A role model even in tough times**

As a regional representative, I appreciated Sarah above all for the fact that she gave a good example through her





Sarah's team in Garoua

life and service of what a Christian missionary should be like. She lived the vision and values of EBM INTERNATIONAL and always showed respect for the hierarchy and authority of the national leaders. Especially in the last few years, when there were many disagreements within the Cameroonian Union, she wisely stayed away from party politics.

She showed courage by denouncing irregularities in the administration and operation of the hospital and making suggestions for better management. Unfortunately, this has also led to some clashes with some of those in charge of the hospital and medical work.

I would like to thank her for the fact that all these and many other

behaviors have helped to make our cooperation a success.

**God's blessings for you, dear Sarah!**

Now that Sarah has been back in Germany since December 2024, I hope that she will continue to remain faithful to the Lord, that God will allow her whole family to be together in Germany, and that He will open new doors for them in ministry, giving them new experiences and blessings.

*Based on a report by Magloire Kadjo, EBMI Regional Representative for Central Africa*

**Values of EBM INTERNATIONAL**

- We work equally for everyone and in everything we do.
- We support the work of women at all levels of leadership.
- We work together in partnership and rely on each other.
- All of our projects are connected to a local church.
- Holistic mission focuses on every aspect of human life.
- Sustainability can be achieved through personal initiative and helping people to help themselves.

## Discover Mission: flexible and self-funded

Eight young people are currently doing voluntary service in Malawi, South Africa and India. We sent all of these volunteers through the publicly funded “weltwärts” program of the German government. As we realized some time ago, this form of funding involves a great deal of administrative work and does not cover the costs. Therefore, we are initially suspending this form of funding.

This gives us the freedom to rethink voluntary service



independently of formal requirements. After all, the interest remains high. Particularly short periods of service in the mission are in demand in all age groups. We continue to offer this within the scope of our possibilities after an individual assessment. These assignments are self-financed, i.e. the costs incurred (flights, insurance, pocket money, accommodation and meals locally, etc.) are covered by the volunteer’s own funds or a circle of supporters.

### Grow personally, serve people and experience God with EBMI:

- Period: 3-12 months
- Countries: Argentina (Spanish), Cameroon (French), Malawi (English), South Africa (English), India (English)
- Self-financed
- Age: 18-99 years

More information:

[www.ebm-international.org/freiwilligendienst](http://www.ebm-international.org/freiwilligendienst)

## Farewell, dear Kathy!

On behalf of the many volunteers that Kathy Behrens has accompanied, and the volunteers that she supported during the courses before departure and after return, Kristina Hasenpusch writes a word of thanks:

“I thank Kathy for the opportunity to work as a speaker for the volunteer service over the years. In addition to teaching units on various topics, I was able to work closely with her and help lead the program.

Kathy has continued to develop the volunteer program over the years. It was important to her that the teaching units are interactive, playful and contemporary, and that the participants are challenged to develop topics and live out their creativity. In addition to theory, there were also units in experiential education, dance and theater.



Her aim was to support young people on their way abroad, in the host country itself and after returning home. Kathy was faced with the challenge of finding good and new locations of service in the various countries, having reliable local contacts and working successfully with the state organization “weltwärts”. A task that was not always easy and required flexibility and creativity.

A big “thank you” to Kathy for many years in the volunteer program, which could not have taken place without her. All the best for the future!”

by Kristina Hasenpusch, former missionary in South Africa, intercultural trainer and staff member involved in preparing volunteers for their service abroad





## Overcoming poverty, giving dignity

In January, Dr. Michael Kisskalt, Secretary General of EBM INTERNATIONAL, took part in the annual meeting of all Indian project partners. He took the opportunity to visit some projects in eastern India. A report.

Even though it is Sunday, almost all the children from the Christian children's home and the associated school are present in the courtyard. They stand in rank and file, the flagpole is prepared. It is "Indian Republic Day", the day of the republic, a national holiday. During the roll call, two songs are sung, more or less harmoniously, a Christian song and a song with moral-political content appropriate to the day. Then the Indian oath is recited, a promise of integrity to the country and its people, with the right arm held out. As a German, I find this gesture irritating. When I tell them about it later, they just smile: these historical realities are too far away for them. After the oath, I have the honor of raising the

Indian flag, or rather, pulling firmly on the rope so that the flag opens and a shower of flower petals falls on us.

### Life in a children's home

Thereafter, the children disperse to classrooms and dormitories and show me around. They laugh a lot and are cheerful. From some of them, I learn about the terrible circumstances they come from. Now they are cared for and safe. The dormitories, the beds and the classrooms are very simply furnished, with berths close together. But the essentials are there. Sometimes two classes are taught in one room. I wonder how that can work, but for the people here it seems normal: "No problem!" Teachers and supervisors,

women and men, Christians and Hindus, are mostly very young people themselves who are committed to taking care of the children. Some of them grew up in the children's home themselves, graduated from school with good grades and now work as teachers or educators at the school and social center. They usually receive a modest salary, but it is enough to live on. I like the fact that the children laugh a lot and also get up to some childish mischief. It's a good sign that they can really be children here. The supervisors' admonitions seem strict but friendly. Children romp, adults admonish. We also know this back and forth from our own lives.



The Indian partners, Michael Kisskalt and Jens Zimmermann

→ I also found the kitchen where the meals for the children are prepared to be interesting. Everything is very simple, but the bright colors of a wide variety of vegetables and fruits radiate towards me. I am amazed to learn about the thousand different types of rice and the medium quality that they prepare for the children here.

### Ready for the world of work

After a short lunch break, the celebrations for the completion of the vocational training programs continue. A training center is also part of the project. Among other things, it offers courses in IT and technology. The sewing and tailoring courses are particularly popular. Hundreds of women take part every year and receive a certificate and their own sewing machine at the end of their training. This enables them to escape from poverty, to take control of their lives, to earn their own money and to feed their families. All of this is celebrated in a big way so that the families of the graduates can also take part and the whole city is aware of it.

### Christian church in India

Pastor Samuel accompanied me on my visits to the children's home, the school and the training center. He is an active pastor in several Christian



The two directors of the hospital in Serango



Fresh food for children and guests

churches and a skilled leader of social projects. On another day, I attended two church services. The first was in a recently founded church in a new building. They call it the "Community Hall" – a public meeting place – but the cross on the outside is clearly visible.

Like other Baptist churches and community halls in the region, the building has many rooms: the worship room and various multifunctional rooms for the further education courses for the population. The fact that the Christian initiatives are open to everyone, regardless of religion or caste, is certainly one reason why the services are quickly overcrowded by the many people. Christian social work draws people into the churches because it restores their dignity. What is irritating for me is the relationship between pastor and church. In Indian culture, the spiritual leader has almost the status of a saint. I also experience this as a guest. People seek the praying, blessing touch and kiss my feet. I had already taken off my shoes, as I do in all houses in India, especially in places of worship. The only thing missing was the white robe, which is appropriate for a spiritual leader in this region. In amazement, I summed up the day: Christians behave

and organize themselves quite differently in different cultures. But as long as the love of God can be felt and experienced, I can easily endure or even live with these differences.

### Partnership at eye level

As in all EBMI projects, the leadership of the social and church ministries is in local hands. And that is where it is in good hands. We support, help and advise. In this partnership on an equal footing, many people can be helped in body, soul and spirit.

This form of partnership is also celebrated at the partner meeting. Every year, around 20 project managers associated with us come together for three days. The last meeting took place in Serango, a village in the mountains in the state of Odisha. This region is home to the Sora ethnic group. Like all Indian natives (Adivasi), they rank at the bottom of the Hindu-influenced social system. Many of the Sora became Christians under the influence of Canadian Baptist missionaries in the mid-20th century, so that there is a relatively strong Baptist union there, even though the missionaries have long since left.

Our partner there is the Christian



Thurangi Church – Samuel Sagar





Great joy at the visit

hospital, run by two young women, Dr. Rachel and Dr. Lilja. This is the first job for both of them after graduating from medical school. The small rural hospital is extremely important for the medical care of the population in this remote region. Unfortunately, the associated eye clinic down in the valley had to close due to a lack of funds and personnel.

Back to the partner meeting: It takes place in the Sora Baptist guest house, next to the hospital. The conference is led by our regional representative Dr. Judson, who is unable to be there due to illness but is connected online. Everyone helps to ensure that the meeting is a success even without him. Everyone reports, shares joys and sorrows of their work and usually underlays this with good pictures that are projected onto the screen. After each report, there is a discussion: questions

are asked, advice is given; people help each other. I am pleased and feel how much expertise and mutual solidarity come together here. It is an honor for us at EBMI to be able to help here.

#### **A church with an open door to society**

A special topic of the meeting is how to develop and move Christian Churches forward. I give some impulses from a European perspective. The idea that Christian churches should always have an open door to society, preferably in the form of a social initiative, is a matter of course for them. Nevertheless, they found the seven characteristics of a healthy church (by the English theologian Robert Warren) interesting. In particular, they discussed what constitutes good leadership. They struggle with our European basic democratic approach, but they engage in the discussion. They can also understand that as a leader, you find ways to

involve as many people as possible in responsibility.

All in all, I am once again fascinated by the bustling, colorful world of India, but also shocked by the many dirty corners full of poverty and suffering. It encourages me that there are so many well-educated and motivated young people who do not resign themselves, but have good ideas and take responsibility, also in our projects. This hope inspires me and makes some of the problems we face in Central Europe seem small. I am so grateful for the many people who pray and help to make these elementary projects in India work, making the love of God tangible for many and changing difficult life situations for the better.

*by Dr. Michael Kisskalt*

New member of staff introduces herself

# A breath of fresh air in our volunteering program

Since November 1, 2024, Nadja Lauber has been bringing a breath of fresh air to our team in Elstal. She replaces Kathy Behrens, who, after ten years as a coordinator for volunteer services at EBM INTERNATIONAL, has embarked on new professional paths. In the following, we will get to know who Nadja is and what motivates her.

Hello everyone! My name is Nadja Lauber and I am the new volunteer coordinator at EBM INTERNATIONAL.

## Where are you from and where do you live now, Nadja?

I come from Kazakhstan, from Almaty, a beautiful city with high mountains. I grew up there in a large family with ten other siblings. My parents taught me about the Christian faith. When I was 13 years old, I accepted Jesus as my personal savior and redeemer into my heart. Since then, it has been very important to me to pass on the love that Jesus has shown me to other people. I work 20 hours at EBMI and study at the Theological University of Elstal for a Master's degree in "Social Work and Social Theology". The first semester is already over and the first exams are behind me. I live on campus in Elstal.

## What has your life been like so far?

I have spent most of my life in Kazakhstan. There I completed a training program to become a primary school teacher (yes, very different than in Germany) and later I received my bachelor's degree in philology (linguistics) in German and English.

When I finished my studies two years ago, I came to Oldenburg (Lower Saxony) as an au pair to improve my German. There I found a wonderful Baptist church, the Kreuzkirche Oldenburg, where I volunteered to translate services into Russian. After that, I did a year of voluntary social service in this church. During this time, I met great women in leadership positions. This encouraged me to start my master's degree in social work. Working at EBM INTERNATIONAL helps me to combine theory and practice. I can now pass on my experiences as a volunteer abroad to other young people.

## What inspires you about EBM INTERNATIONAL?

There are three things that inspire me: the people who work in different places around the world with the goal of sharing God's love with others. The diversity of cultures, languages, and backgrounds, and at the same time the unity in our goals and in working together. Heaven will certainly be very colorful too. I'm really looking forward to it! And the third thing I love are the different projects that exist here. My favorite project is of course the volunteer program.

## What are you most looking forward to?

I'm especially happy to be working with such great colleagues. I'm also looking forward to the opportunity to further develop the volunteer program and contribute new ideas. And to gain new experience and develop my talents further.

It's great to have you here, Nadja!

