



## A home for children

- » The daily lives of Sheila, Santiago and Kiron
- » Where dignity is given value (again)
- » A healing place for Yassin





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Cover photo:  
Girl from India

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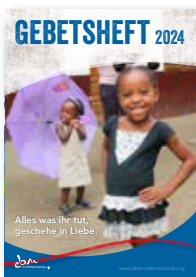
*"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"*  
Luke 2,14

## Dear readers!



As Christians, we joyfully celebrate every year that the eternal, almighty God became man in Jesus Christ. He became our fellow human being and brother in order to free and redeem us from our entanglements and hardships. God is like this: we are important to him, he seeks us, he wants to be close to us. That is why we celebrate him, give him all the glory and gratefully receive his peace. Nevertheless, this gift is also our mission: to go to the people who are suffering in body and soul. We want to share God's love with them in word and deed – and thus give them the chance of a life worthy of human dignity. God's peace arrives, becomes tangible and God is happy about it. I am convinced of this.

In this magazine, you can read about how particularly disadvantaged children experience precisely this in many of our mission projects. Committed Christians around the world bring them the love of God, become their sister and brother, help them to the best of their ability and spread happiness and joy. The report on India on page 16, for example, shows just how innovative we can be when it comes to helping. Creative projects like this never cease to inspire me. The fact that our employees are able to do this is thanks to you, the faithful prayers, the generous gifts and the commitment of our missionary friends who support our work.



We are therefore delighted with the newly designed 2024 prayer booklet, which will be sent to selected supporters and churches shortly. The booklet is a good guide for our prayers for the mission. So that heaven may touch earth. This encourages and motivates us. Thank you for accompanying us in prayer and making our projects possible through your donations.

We wish you much inspiration and God's blessing as you read this magazine.

*Dr. Michael Kißkalt*  
General Secretary



POSTER to tear out!

# The daily lives of Sheila, Santiago and Kiron

The living conditions for children around the world could not be more different. They are born into circumstances that they did not choose. Some are the suffering victims of society through no fault of their own. We present three children growing up on three different continents. Their stories are different, but they have one thing in common: they now have a loving and safe environment.

## Three facilities for children

The Sekeleka Social Center in Macia, Mozambique, has been caring for neglected children for 20 years and currently has a special focus on six children with disabilities. Director Sara Marcos and her team also provide day care for 50 other children.

The Norberto Haase children's home in Alem/Argentina was founded 40

years ago. Children from difficult backgrounds are cared for there. The 32 girls and boys currently live in small family groups and are taken care of by the house parents.

The Asha Kiran children's home in Gotlam/India was founded in 2000. On the Bridge of Hope campus there is also a large clinic, a vocational training school for young men

and women and a church. There are currently 64 boys and girls living in the children's home.

*Lars Müller compiled the children's stories. The names have been changed.*

## Sheila from Macia

Sheila lived on the street for many years. Her parents are no longer alive. Her grandmother, who looked after her for a while, became an alcoholic and could no longer care for her. Sheila suffers from hydrocephalus (increased intracranial pressure due to too much cerebrospinal fluid), which is why she has had repeated epileptic seizures and is severely delayed in her development. She is 18 years old, but has the mentality of a five-year-old. She experienced violence at home and on the street. She therefore finds it difficult to build trust with her fellow human beings. When she came to the social center in 2018, she blossomed. She learned to trust others, hardly has any epileptic seizures anymore and is learning to read and write.



Sheila (left) together with Sara Marcos

On Sundays, the children go to church on the campus. Each child has godparents there who take special care of them, take them on trips or let them stay overnight.

Sheila enjoys playing with the other children and looks after the younger ones. She is grateful to have a loving family and a safe home: "What I love most here is my aunt, my mother, Vovo Sara, the pastor and the visits to my godparents in Maputo".

## Daily routine

The day starts **at 06:00** in the social center.

**7:00 a.m.:** There is breakfast together, usually milk or tea and bread with butter.

**From 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.** Sheila attends day care, where there are various activities (handicrafts, reading and writing, sports, etc.)

**At 12:00** all the children eat lunch together, rice with beans, fish or meat, nsima (maize porridge) and sometimes pizza.

**In the afternoon,** she likes to accompany other children home, does her homework and helps around the house. She loves baking cakes, music and dancing.

Dinner is served **at 7 p.m.,** again in the small group, often rice with fish and salad. Afterwards they tidy up and do the dishes.

**At 8:30 pm** there is a time of prayer together.

**From 21:00** it's time for bed.



## Santiago from Alem

12-year-old Santiago and his little brother have been living in the children's home in Alem for a year now. They both live in a family group with ten children and share their room with two other boys. Santiago comes from a difficult background. His father is in prison and his mother hardly looked after her children because she was a drug addict. The siblings were often out on the street begging.

All the children go to church together on Sundays. Santiago was baptized last year. At the weekend, he sometimes visits his godfather, who attends the same church. His greatest wish is to be adopted and go on a trip to Brazil. After school, he would like to study and become a businessman.

### Daily routine

The day at the children's home starts **at 07:00** with tidying up the rooms.

**7:30 a.m.:** Breakfast is served in the family groups, with tea or milk and muesli, yoghurt and bread.

**In the morning,** Santiago helps around the house, does his homework and has some free time.

**At 12:30,** they have lunch together, often beef or fish with rice and vegetables. He attends school **from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m.** His favorite subject is math.

**In the afternoon,** he likes to play soccer, watches TV or takes part in the home's activities (e.g. computer course, dancing, prayer meetings).

**At 7 p.m.,** the family group has dinner, often pasta with chicken and pulses or sometimes rice pudding.

**From 21:00** it's time for bed.



Santiago together with his little brother

## Kiron from Gotlam

Kiron is 13 years old and comes from a small village on the east coast of India. He has been living in the Asha Kiran children's home since last year. As school in Kiron's home village is only available up to grade 5, he had to move to Gotlam to attend secondary school.

There is also a church on the Bridge of Hope campus, which the children attend every Sunday. Kiron loves hearing stories from the Bible and singing along to the songs. The teenager is grateful for the opportunity to live on campus. He wants to become a teacher and help children in his village so that they can go to school and get an education.



Kiron

### Daily routine

The day at the children's home starts **at 5:00 am.**

**At 5:45** there is an hour of morning prayer.

**7:00 a.m.:** Breakfast in the dining room, mostly Idly (steamed rice and bean cakes with a spicy lentil sauce) and sweet tea.

School starts **at 8:00 am** and ends at 4:30 pm

**In the afternoon,** Kiron does his homework and has some time to play volleyball or Carrom (a popular Indian board game) with his friends.

**At 7:00 pm,** dinner is served in the dining hall. It is usually rice with dhal (a spicy sauce made from lentils, chickpeas and kidney beans) and vegetable or chicken curry.

The entire children's home goes to sleep **from 21:00.**

## A healing place for Yassin

*More than 50 girls and boys, especially those with disabilities, receive intensive care at the social center in Macia. There is also a Baptist church on the campus. Around 100 other children and their families are visited regularly and receive help with school, food and advice, pastoral care and prayer. Spanish missionary Sara Marcos supports the team on site. She tells the moving story of Yassin.*



Yassin feels at home in the social center

There was something wrong with Yassin from birth. He was always sickly and did not develop like his three siblings. Yassin's mother took him from one healer to the next – who tried to bring about an improvement with herbs, incantations and rituals. Nothing helped. Finally, his mother decided to take a drastic step and trained as a healer herself. Her children were left alone for a year. During this time, staff from the social center got to know the family and began to provide the siblings with food. They also took them to the day care center. After the mother's return, the children's situation improved – except for Yassin. Sometimes he was in hospital, then back at the day clinic.

One of Yassin's sisters started going to church every Sunday. She liked

the services, but she couldn't take her brother with her. He could barely walk and it was too far.

When the now 10-year-old fell seriously ill with malaria a few months ago, everyone feared for his life. He lost a lot of weight and could hardly move. His mother wanted to take her son to the medicine men, but the team at the social center asked her to give Yassin into their care. She tearfully accepted the offer.

Yassin is now living temporarily at the social center. He is being treated by doctors, given medication and is slowly regaining his strength. Further examinations will show which illnesses have affected his development so far.

He loves listening to music – then he smiles and carefully starts to dance. His mother is amazed at the change and is happy that her child is doing better.

Children like Yassin and their families receive individual support from the team at the social center: in coping with everyday life and schoolwork, through occupational therapy or medical care. One particular success of the work is the change that is slowly taking place in society: Blind or deaf children, girls and boys with chronic illnesses or disabilities are less hidden and marginalized. Sara Marcos and her team show how every child can receive care and support. Because they are loved and valuable.



# Giving children a home and education

The brothers Rajid and Ravi (names changed) have often had to move house: There were always problems with landlords or neighbors. When their father died, it became increasingly difficult for their mother to provide for her children. A relative told us about the "Anandanilayam" children's home in Tallarevu/India. For about a year now, the boys have been able to live there and go to school – the mother is happy to know that her children have a safe and loving home there.

In India, twelve children's homes provide safe accommodation for orphaned children and social orphans like Rajid and Ravi. The girls and boys are safe from exploitation and child labor and are given the chance of a school education.



Rajid and Ravi with mother and sister

There are also numerous EBM INTERNATIONAL projects in Latin America where children and young people receive help. PEPE and MANNA projects offer care and support from pre-school age. Social centers are places for practical help, pastoral support for entire families and offer care and education for all age groups. The children's home in Alem/Argentina offers around 40 children a loving home in family groups.



A family group in the Alem children's home

The social center in Macia/Mozambique looks after children with and without disabilities and supports them in their development. A large team also visits families in the surrounding area and offers advice and practical help. A preschool rounds off the program. Our schools in Africa help girls and boys to lay a solid foundation for further education and an independent life.



Children from the social center in Macia

**Together with you, we want to meet the needs of vulnerable children worldwide and give them a home and an education.**

Girls and boys experience love, care and safety in more than 50 projects. All initiatives are affiliated with a local church and invite children to faith through Sunday school or church services.

**Your Christmas donation – whether as a collection in the church, as proceeds from a bazaar or as an individual – gives hope to girls and boys:**

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Thank you for your gifts and prayers!

## Where dignity is given value (again)

*Diadema. A large city south of the giant metropolis of São Paulo. The population density here is particularly high. 70 percent of the city consists of so-called favelas, the slums, often the starting point for drug dealing and crime. Since 2002, the social center has been an important point of contact for children, young people and parents to receive support in all areas of life. Young people and adults can now take part in free certified courses to qualify for vocational training, particularly in IT and carpentry.*

Monday lunchtime. It is bustling and teeming with children. One by one, they stream out of the school and into their rooms, towards their supervisors, bumping into each other, shouting, screaming, romping, laughing – just what children do. Some of them did not go to school and are just as welcome. These were and are the poorest of the poor to whom the social center in Diadema provides services. And their parents too.



### Arriving in Diadema

Roberta (name changed) is also there on this Monday afternoon. She is 14 years old and attending for the first time. She seems shy and anxious. Everything and everyone is strange to her. Nevertheless, she dares to smile gently. Her heart aches because life scares her and she suffers from depression. No one really knows how long she has been depressed or why exactly. Only Roberta herself knows how she feels. In her childhood, she lived with her grandmother. Her mother's mother. She loves and admires her very much. But she is now far away, as her family has moved to Diadema. Here at the social center, the teachers and carers quickly notice that the reserved girl needs special attention, care and protection. They have a keen sense and an experienced eye for the subtle nuances of the children's souls. Because in all their

work, one thing is important to them: respecting the dignity of each individual and helping the children to discover and protect their worth. Through the activities on offer, the children and young people learn how to move in this world.

This includes courses in which the young people learn to perceive and express their own feelings in an age-appropriate way. They practice conflict resolution, reflect on life and death and learn

Roberta



The team in Diadema

about their rights and duties as citizens of the country. Children's days are also organized, birthdays and parties are celebrated and creative workshops on various topics are offered. There are also tips on how to deal well with social media and much more.

### A new start

Roberta's parents were not there to protect her from the dangers of the internet. They had divorced when she was still a child. She was often alone and felt neglected. Her relationship with her mother, with whom she has lived for several years, is not good. Roberta finds it difficult to confide in her. She feels that her mother is not really there for her. And so Roberta loses herself in her sadness more and more often in the vastness of the internet. It was just a harmless game she was playing on her cell phone. Suddenly, one click lands her on another site. She met a man via a chat and came into contact with pornography. She learned that abuse is also possible via the internet. She tried to commit



suicide several times, but she is still here. Still alive. And in good hands at the social center. Even though she finds it difficult to settle into her new school, Roberta quickly makes friends in the social center's volleyball course. She feels that the exercise and the community are good for her. The others in the team also like her. She would never have thought that. She also receives medication and psychotherapeutic treatment. All of this helps to bring light into the darkness of her soul.

### Touching Life – touched by life

In the Touching Life program, Roberta receives additional support and help. Together with other teenagers, she spends a year learning to think intensively about herself. The group becomes a safe space for her. She feels welcome just as she is. Over time, she gains confidence and opens up. Especially towards herself. She reflects a lot on her childhood, life with her grandmother and the painful separation of her parents. In the group, she learns that she is valuable and lovable – even with the pain and suffering she



Well looked after: teenagers at the social center in Diadema

has experienced. She feels that the heaviness becomes lighter and has much kinder thoughts about herself than before. Roberta plucks up the courage to shape her own life. Everyone in the group has matured during the year and has been able to apply much of what they have learned to their own lives. This development touches the caregivers and makes them grateful. Roberta really appreciates the peace and friendliness of the staff. This also makes her mother happy.

Director Simone Heimann Almeida sums up what Roberta and the many children, young people and families experience at the social center: "The facility is like a lighthouse in the neighborhood that lights up the darkness. Everyone who is taken in, cared for and welcomed can experience that this place is overflowing with peace, love and security."

*By Julia-Kathrin Raddek*



Girls' volleyball team at the social center.









**YOUR JOY SHALL  
BE COMPLETE!**

According to John 15, 11





Handmade baskets for sale



# From dependence to self-determination: Prospects for tribal communities

*The small, yellow blossoms of the butter tree move nimbly from the forest floor through the hands of Sukanti into their basket. It is painstakingly hard work. People in Chhattisgarh and Odisha have always processed the blossoms, fruits and nuts of the tree. The butter tree is revered and the liqueur made from its blossoms is a staple at every celebration. It is thanks to the "Green Action Project" in her village of Jampali that Sukanti makes enough profit from selling the blossoms to feed her family.*

It is not a new idea for people to harvest the fruits of the forest, eat them themselves or sell parts of them. What is new is that the women and men are now doing this systematically and together. In addition, they received important start-up support for their production community. The change brought about by the one-year old project of EBM INTERNATIONAL and the local partner Jesus Loves Ministries (JLM) is remarkable.

The states of Chhattisgarh and Odisha are among the poorest in India. The remote forest areas are mainly inhabited by tribal communities that have always been excluded from the caste system. A system of forced labor still persists in some regions: entire generations have to work for their owners like serf slaves. A way out of this is not desired. As a rule, people could only escape the resulting poverty if they managed to find work far away in the big cities. When the coronavirus pandemic hit India particularly hard and all travel was strictly prohibited, the plight of the rural tribal communities grew once again.

## A climate-friendly project to combat hunger

Samarpana Praveen, head of Jesus Loves Ministries and pastor of Bethel Baptist Church in Uppada, was already helping the poorest people of Chhattisgarh during the pandemic and initiated the Green Action project to provide families with a sustainable income. A second aspect is just as important: by establishing natural plantations, the land

is being greened – an important contribution to climate protection. The aim of the project is to cultivate various useful and medicinal plants from the forest using modern methods, to preserve the products and to sell them through joint initiatives.

The Indian butter tree is just one of many plants: Tendu leaves, tamarind and various nuts and fruits are collected and processed seasonally. Brooms woven from twigs or home-made baskets made from bamboo are also sold. The Green Action project imparts knowledge, helps with the construction of warehouses and production rooms and with the purchase of small machines. Samarpana Praveen reports: "We have completed setting up an office, prepared material for training programs and formed a network of 45 self-help groups to reach 45 villages. In the meantime, we are working with the Chhattisgarh government to allocate 25 hectares of land for the climate change program, which will start next year."

## Ways out of poverty

Women like Sukanti are already benefiting from growing incomes. Various tribal communities and landless migrant workers live in her village of Jampali. The prices they used to receive for the berries or fruit they collected were often low. Together, they can sell preserved products out of season and achieve higher prices as a cooperative. This motivates, strengthens solidarity and means a sustainable improvement in living conditions.

Jesus Loves Ministries is continuously expanding the project: Further village communities are to be reached. The milk and egg program, which has been successful in other regions, has also been launched. Once a week, and later more often if possible, around 50 children receive a meal to combat malnutrition.

The climate also benefits from the Green Action project: workers, who previously had to earn their living far away, created a green agricultural area on a 20-hectare wasteland. This created tree nurseries for long-term use. Fruit trees, medicinal plants and timber plantations provide work and income.

In total, around 925 families are to be enabled to have a better outlook on life through a regular income.

EBM INTERNATIONAL is supporting the project for three years and is funding it with up to 100,000 euros over this period. This season, Sukanti collected 189 kilos of butter tree blossoms, which she was able to sell at a profit. She is grateful: Thanks to the support, she, her family and the village community have found a way out of poverty and into self-determination.



# On the way to reconstruction

*The major earthquake that shook large parts of eastern Turkey on February 6 is still a major trauma for the country. Every aftershock still brings further destruction and horror to the people. Those affected in the disaster areas still need help. Our brothers and sisters in Adana, Izmir and many other places are still helping wherever they can – an interim report.*

According to official estimates, more than 50,000 people died as a result of the earthquakes. However, speculations suggest that there were more than 200,000 deaths – there are too many bank accounts where no movements have been recorded since February, too many missing persons, too many collapsed houses to which no one has returned. People are still looking for a new perspective elsewhere, for a few months or forever.

## Suddenly everything is lost

Sinan (name changed) came to Izmir after the earthquake. His two daughters are studying there. He lost his wife and relatives in the disaster. He had 15 apartments to rent. These have been destroyed. His butcher's shop was also destroyed. The 60-year-old is constantly experiencing grief, disappointment and fear. Above all, it is the sudden neediness that causes him so much trouble: He had everything, and after one night everything was lost. He received help from the brothers and sisters in the church in Izmir. He now lives near the church in

Izmir-Buca and has opened a new butcher's shop.

The many months of practical help were also a great strain for the disaster relief workers: Meeting the distress and despair of those affected, distributing relief supplies, looking death in the eye, enduring the stench of corpses – the mental strain was great.

It is almost impossible to put the humanitarian aid into figures: in the first few weeks alone, thousands of parcels containing food, water, clothing and hygiene articles were packed in the core areas of the earthquake (Antakya, Adiyaman, Kahramanmaraş) and in Izmir, transported by trucks to the crisis regions and distributed. Beds, stoves and blankets were also provided. A logistical masterpiece for which, for example, the church in Izmir was converted into a transshipment point for relief supplies and large tents were purchased to temporarily store materials.

The great voluntary commitment did not go unnoticed: the cooperation

with local authorities and the Turkish Crescent (equivalent to the German Red Cross) was carried out with mutual appreciation and support – all the way across the Syrian border to the Idlib region.

## Church in Adana

It was the brothers and sisters in Adana and the surrounding area who were affected themselves. Pastor Abdullah, a pastor in Istanbul, lost 27 family members in his home town of Kahramanmaraş. He was there for this very reason and helped as long as his strength lasted. The rooms that the congregation in Adana used for their church services were temporarily closed for security reasons. They have been renting a new meeting place since July. Yet the congregation's perspective there was completely different: They had been looking for a plot of land to build their own center for a long time. The desire is still there – the search continues.

In Antakya, the biblical Antioch just before the Syrian border, many people live in tents and containers. The latter proved to be impractical – they were too hot in summer and too cold in winter. The state is trying to demolish the destroyed buildings and clear the rubble. Mountains of rubble are piling up outside the city. There is growing concern about what will happen in winter. Pastor Şahin and his wife Meryem from Adana are still distributing food and clothing, talking to those seeking help and praying with them. This gives them comfort and hope.

The type of practical support is also slowly changing: materials for reconstruction are particularly in demand. Four Tiny Houses, which the Turkish



Charity overcomes borders – Ertan Çevik in Idlib/Syria.





Meryem Çakmak together with a helper



New living space for refugees – Temporary home in the Tiny House

Baptist Union was able to buy and erect on the property of a member of the congregation, are making a small but sustainable contribution. Four families can now live there until they have found a suitable place to live. The small wooden houses can be quickly dismantled and used in other places – even in the event of further disasters.

### Great gratitude for the solidarity

The exchange and sense of solidarity between Christians in Turkey, but also in cooperation with state organizations and associations, has

grown considerably. Local mayors ask the Christians directly for help and are grateful for their support. "It doesn't matter that you are not Muslims – you are helping us, that alone is important," says a woman from Iskenderun as a team visits her in her self-built tent and distributes relief supplies. She then gives the helpers a warm hug.

Ertan Çevik, who coordinates and is responsible for the relief efforts together with his daughter Hürrem Keskin, is very happy about the great solidarity from Germany and Europe: "I would like to thank all

the churches and brothers and sisters who have supported us in our time of need. We have realized that we are not alone and that many are standing behind us in prayer!"

The reconstruction measures will continue for at least another three years – let's stay connected to our brothers and sisters in Turkey and continue to pray for them: For strength, healing and above all for hope.

*Michael Fischbeck spoke with Pastor Ertan Çevik in September*



Help for the little ones

### DONATIONS

We would like to thank everyone who helped those affected in Turkey and Syria in the spring with their generous donations and made the relief work possible. At present, the current aid operations are also covered by these donations. The situation is different when it comes to the budget for EBM INTERNATIONAL's ongoing projects. We therefore ask for unrestricted donations (project number 10 000) or donations for the area mentioned in this issue "Children at risk" (10 500). If you have any questions regarding the use of donations, please do not hesitate to contact us!

# Building bridges for a fairer (labor) world

*EBM INTERNATIONAL has been supporting the Indian aid organization "Bridge of Hope" for many years. The campus in Gotlam is home to a hospital, a children's home and a vocational training center with a sewing workshop and other facilities. Now the new German association "Bridge of Hope Germany e.V." is building another bridge of hope between India and Germany. Fair and sustainable textile products from the project are sold in German-speaking countries. The profits support both the people in India and EBMI projects. In an interview with Josie Streck (JS) and Ben Nutzinger (BN), I, Julia-Kathrin Raddek (JKR), found out a little about the history of Bridge of Hope Germany e.V. and what it is all about.*

**JKR:** How did you come up with the idea of having sustainable and fair clothing produced in Gotlam in co-operation with our partner Bridge of Hope?

**JS:** I spent two weeks in India with EBMI in 2018 and got to know a few projects. After the trip, the idea arose as to whether these sewing projects could be supported in such a way that items could also be sold here in Germany. Back in Germany, I shared the idea with EBMI and found out that two years earlier, Anil Benjamin, the director from Gotlam, had approached EBMI and asked about a cooperation opportunity. I didn't know that and at that moment a bridge was built to this old idea. That really touched us. That's

how the name came about: Bridge of Hope. I then got a few friends together, including Ben, and two women. Then came Corona and we experienced a few disappointments. Two years ago we founded the association and in November 2022 Ben traveled to India.

**JKR:** What exactly did you do there?

**BN:** I went to the sewing school in Gotlam and traveled to Tiruppur. There, nuns make everything themselves in a small textile factory. From the first to the last step. They are one of the first to offer fair trade fabrics in India. I took a look at what it takes to produce fair T-shirts – machines, work steps – and how textiles are made.

**JKR:** What prospects do you have for your association?

**BN:** We don't have a lot of start-up capital to produce ourselves, so we're having our T-shirts made in Tiruppur for the time being. Who knows, maybe one day we'll be able to start production ourselves. For now, we want to grow slowly and build up a customer base. We have now had some nice bags made in Gotlam with our logo on them (see photo). We will become a kind of middleman and develop into a network. Other projects could get involved at any time and we could form a bridge between them and Germany and the communities.

**JS:** We have started a cooperation with a project from Sri Lanka that processes recycled sari textiles. We are a non-profit organization and want to stay that way and not make a profit from what we offer. On the contrary: the profits flow into EBMI's work and benefit the local people.

**JKR:** What is your personal objective with your association?

**JS:** We want to support people. We dream of a fairer world in which people are not exploited but work in good and fair working conditions. That's what our heart beats for. I have written a few essays on the topics of exploitation and human trafficking. This has heightened my awareness. We want to make a statement against this and show what a difference slow fashion



Trainees at the sewing school in Gotlam





Josie Streck, Ben Nutzinger and Luciana Artmann (from left to right)

makes in contrast to fast fashion (see box). We want to do educational and awareness-raising work.

**JKR:** How can people support you and your cause?

**BN:** Anyone who is concerned about these issues can take action with us and buy our fair T-shirts from now on. We don't want to condemn anyone, we want to raise awareness, fulfill our Christian mission to bring more justice into the world and make a real difference.

**JS:** Invite us. We would be happy to come to your church and give a sermon and talk about our association or run workshops on slow fashion or human trafficking. And we are open to new team members. We are happy when people join us, share our passion and contribute their ideas.

**BN:** Especially tax consultants! We need support there. We've been looking for quite a while and it's hard to find someone. We've been on the road for a few years now since the initial idea, and the fact that we're still here is a miracle. Because we haven't sold a single T-shirt yet. But we know we're close to the harvest. That's all the better. We're really up for it because we've been waiting so

long. This is just the beginning and it could be very different. We are open to God leading us.

**JS:** It motivates us to see that God keeps encouraging us to keep going. The way it started was no coincidence. God's heart beats for Bridge of Hope.

**JKR:** Those were two beautiful closing words. Thank you very much for your openness and the inspiring conversation.

#### What is slow and fast fashion?

**Slow Fashion:** fair working conditions, fair wages, high quality, reasonable prices, environmentally friendly production, recyclable materials.

**Fast fashion:** exploitative conditions, low wages, poorer quality, low prices, partly polluted production methods, "disposable" goods.

The BoH Germany e.V. team offers lectures, seminars, sermons and workshops on the topics of labor exploitation, modern slavery, fast and slow fashion and fair working conditions. If you are interested, please contact them.



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The team from Bridge of Hope Germany e.V.



# A learning teacher in South Africa

*In August, Pastor Johann Vollbracht returned to Germany together with his wife Andrea. We thank him from the bottom of our hearts for his faithful service as a teacher. During this time, he mentored more than 70 graduates. Johann held lectures, seminars and training courses for lay people, students and pastors. He also established study days for groups in remote regions and was not afraid to drive many hours over bad roads. He shaped the structures of the Convention College extensively. Thank you for this achievement! In this article, he himself looks back on his service.*

Can one visit the graves of one's deceased relatives in the cemetery?<sup>1</sup> Can a woman visit her parents again in her own home after she has married?<sup>2</sup> Can a childless couple "marry" a single woman who has sons?<sup>3</sup> Is the Christian faith more than the religion of the white colonial masters? I was asked these and similar questions by students during my time in South Africa.

Four years ago, I was sent out by EBM INTERNATIONAL to teach prospective pastors of the Baptist Convention of South Africa (BCSA). The questions mentioned above made me realize again and again that the pastors there are confronted with

different questions and challenges than in Germany. I quickly realized that I can only teach if I am also prepared to learn from my students.

The Christians there have no problem convincing people to believe in God. South Africans are religious people in themselves. Their challenge, however, is to teach the content of the Bible in the local cultural context and to give biblical answers to the questions of the South African people.

During my four years at the theological seminary in South Africa, it was important to me to show that similar questions already existed

at different times in world history and in different places (these questions can be found in the subjects of church history and dogmatics). In doing so, I tried to make it clear that the Bible, even if it does not have precise or concrete answers to certain regional questions, offers principles that can be used to find answers.

During my service there, the work and structure of the Baptist Convention College (BCC) was stabilized and strengthened after years of crisis. The corona pandemic, with all its disadvantages and challenges, has not been able to harm us. In the four years, I have traveled over

Farewell from South Africa: Johann and Andrea Vollbracht







Johann with students from the Baptist Convention College

100,000 kilometers and visited and taught students and active pastors in five regions. I am very thankful that during this time BCC has had over 100 students, of which over 70 have graduated. The majority of them have been ordained or are in initial pastoral ministry.<sup>4</sup>

The country of South Africa, and therefore the country's Baptist family, has been deeply shaped by history. Skin color and the painful history associated with it – from colonization in the 17th century to the apartheid era in the 20th century – are still very present in society and in the churches.

My wife and I are very grateful that we were able to experience that in Jesus Christ, man-made differences

and prejudices can fade into the background. We have found real brothers and sisters in South Africa who have become role models for us with their deep faith in Jesus and their self-sacrificing dedication.

*by Johann Vollbracht  
Our former missionary became pastor of the Spandau-Wilhelmstadt Baptist Church in Berlin in November 2023.*

#### Background: Thinking and customs in parts of South Africa

- 1) Going to the cemetery is generally regarded as talking to the deceased.
- 2) The groom pays "lobola" (bridewealth) to the bride's family. Thereafter, the bride is treated as the property of the groom's family.
- 3) After death, the deceased is transformed into a god-like maker of the fate of his living relatives (usually children and grandchildren). Without offspring of his own, the deceased is without influence after death and does not "enjoy" the god-like status. Childless couples can circumvent this by adopting single women with sons (they call it "marrying"). This ensures their influence even after death.
- 4) The BCSC ordains pastors after a probationary period of two years.

## Thank you, Johann!

It is a great pleasure for me to write a few words about Johann and Andrea Vollbracht. When I met them both, I was struck by their great courage and anticipation to learn and serve in a country where eleven languages are spoken.

Johann has shown great dedication during his time as a lecturer and has led the team to always give their best. His ability to bring people together is something we will never forget.

One of Johann's students who attends my church once came to me very excited: he had received books and essays explaining the Word of God and showing him how to apply it to life. The young man understood how he could now be part of bringing hope and change: To individuals, families, communities and nations.

May God bless you both, Johann and Andrea. Thank you, dear partners and supporters of EBM, for sending missionaries, praying for them and donating. This all contributes to the fact that every nation will worship in the throne room of God (Rev. 7:9).

Johann, your service and dedication, your time and energy have been an example to your students. The entire team at Baptist Convention College has benefited greatly from you.

Your wife and you will always remain in our hearts. Your commitment to the college, our Baptist Union and the country of South Africa has set standards. The women of my church in Lesotho still talk about how you encouraged them through your preaching.

Even as you close the chapter on "South Africa" – stay as powerful and strong in your next ministry!



*Pastor Emma Mabi-dilala from South Africa, President of EBM INTERNATIONAL*



Helping in the  
classroom ▶

Getting creative  
in preschools ▼



▲ Share a little life  
with children

◆ Support  
in the hospital

# Volunteer 2024!

*Discover missions for a year, serve people in a different culture and grow beyond yourself – EBM INTERNATIONAL's volunteer program offers you the opportunity to do just that. For young adults, it is even supported and financed by the Weltwärts program. Individual assignments are also possible – for (almost) all age groups.*

## Placements for summer 2024

**Malawi:** Help the team grow medicinal plants, fruit and vegetables on a farm in Balaka. Training in sustainable agriculture is also provided here and there is a kindergarten. In Senga Bay, we also have a clinic where volunteers can help in the pharmacy and with patient care.

**Cameroon:** In Garoua, there is a kindergarten, a pre-school, a technical training center and a hospital. If you have sufficient knowledge of French, you will quickly make a connection here and can apply for one of the areas mentioned.

**India:** Boys and girls have a safe environment in children's homes run by our Indian partners where they can attend school and later complete an apprenticeship. Voluntary service for 6 to 12 months provides an intensive immersion in this work.

**Argentina:** Volunteers support the families in the Alem children's home. Here, children experience a fixed routine in order to stabilize themselves and grow up in a loving environment.

**Sierra Leone:** In a school, you can help children to learn. This helps them to get a better start in life. Education liberates people from poverty and gives them self-confidence.

**South Africa:** Life in a township has its very own rules. As a volunteer, you will help look after children and get to know this colorful and fascinating country. Voluntary service is particularly beneficial for the reconciliation of the apartheid generation.

### Find out more now and apply for 2024/2025!

Anyone interested in volunteering with EBM INTERNATIONAL can contact the coordinator Kathy Behrens at [kbehrens@ebm-international.org](mailto:kbehrens@ebm-international.org) or by telephone on 033234 74-435

Further information, flyers and personal reports are available on our homepage

[www.ebm-international.org/serve](http://www.ebm-international.org/serve) or at  
[www.hoffnung-international.de](http://www.hoffnung-international.de)