

Partnership *Journal*



Evangelical church district
an Lahn und Dill
HEAR - BELIEVE - ACT

Unity in faith in a world of division



Botswana - Burkina Faso - Erfurt
- Indonesia - Namibia - Siena -
Tambow

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Botswana



Burkina Faso



Erfurt



Indonesia

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Note

At the time of writing the texts for the journal, it was not yet apparent that the planned meeting week of all partnerships in Wetzlar at the end of June 2022 would have to be cancelled due to pandemic and political reasons. Therefore, the texts assume that the consultation will take place in the present.

Bildnachweis:

Titel: Dipositphotos.com

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Greetings

Faith in God unites us. In the church of Jesus Christ, all who confess him as Lord and God are members. His Spirit transforms strangers into sisters and brothers. This is not just a theory, but it is our experience. We were able to make this experience quite often in our partnership encounters; and it is a hope that provides us with serenity and confidence in spite of all the fractures that go through the world.

On the pages of this journal you will meet many dear people. Images and memories are awakened. How diverse and rich is the Church of Jesus Christ! We think back to many encounters, often we have become richer in the process. We have taken away some suggestions, some encouragement, and also some questions for our own work.



By my God I can leap over a wall.

Psalm 18, 30

We would have liked to welcome our friends and partners in the church district of Lahn and Dill in the summer of 2022. Unfortunately, the Corona situation threw a spanner in the works. War and other shocks have been added to the mix. We have often thought of our partners in the past weeks. We have prayed for them and their countries, experiencing how intercession unites you across divides.

It is so simple and yet so rich: Jesus Christ is the Lord of His Church. Where two or three gather in his name, he is there in their midst. Through his Spirit and his Word, he gathers from all peoples a church in the unity of faith. We cannot take this seriously enough.

When we can meet again in real life, we will be thankful. We are already looking forward to it. Then there will be many things for us to discuss with each other and to celebrate together!

Well, none of us knows what tomorrow will bring. But even with all the obstacles, what unites us remains. Even if someone wanted to draw walls between us: With our God we can jump over walls.

Hartmut Sitzler
Superintendent Dr. Hartmut Sitzler



Namibia



Siena



Tambow

Greeting of the district administrator for the journal on the meeting of the partnership consultation with all intra- and extra-European partners of the Protestant church district

Church communities live from community! It is nice that you have decided to broaden the horizon of this community. Not only beyond the borders of our district, but even worldwide, you would like to get in touch with each other and come together in fellowship during this summer of 2022. An undertaking that holds a lot of potential, because:

„What is not possible for the individual, many can accomplish.“ (Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen)

I hope that you will be able to enjoy the charming landscape in our region together and take the opportunity, for example, to gain a little distance from the worries and hardships of everyday life on our local hiking trails, to get into conversation with each other and to exchange ideas. The exchange in the community and beyond the - in many respects - own borders can help to eliminate prejudices and create understanding for each other. For only where people talk openly with each other does it become clear what unites and what divides. Often, new conversations and acquaintances can bring a breath of fresh air and help to explore new perspectives and confront problems, expectations and tasks in a new way.

Both within and outside the church community, I wish you interesting conversations and stimulating discourse during this time to broaden your own horizons with new perspectives.

I wish you all the best, much success, and continued committed people who will help to ensure that the relationships of the church district continue to be so diverse and continue to have an impact far beyond the borders of our district in the future!



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Wolfgang Schuster'. The script is cursive and fluid.

Wolfgang Schuster
District administrator of the Lahn-Dill-District

Editorial

The Evangelical Church District 'an Lahn und Dill' has a treasure trove of partnerships all over the world that is as large as it is diverse. This is not only due to corresponding synod resolutions. It is also due to the intensive commitment of those who, over decades, have worked and continue to work for encounters and projects, for meaningful impulses back and forth. The partnership committees and those responsible in all countries experience that in a world full of wars, conflicts and disputes, the Christian faith unites people from different churches and communities across borders.

The church district 'an Lahn und Dill' has partnerships in Germany (Erfurt), Europe (Siena, Tambow), Asia (Indonesia) and Africa (Botswana, Burkina Faso and Namibia). These ecumenical partnerships were established in the church districts of Braunfels and Wetzlar in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s.

A partnership of the church district 'Wetzlar' with the Anglican 'Deanery of Colchester' in the English county of Essex existed from 1980 until recent times. Many encountering journeys with intensive exchange, also of people of the younger generation, belong to this time. For 20 years, since 1992, there was also the working group 'Life after Chernobyl' in the church district 'Braunfels'. Those responsible were concerned with making life more bearable for the people from the Voloszin district in Belarus who had been affected by the Chernobyl disaster.

The partnership meetings are characterized by mutual visits, projects, actions and events. In several partnerships youth exchange programs play an important role until today. All this contributes to increasing the cohesion and trust in each other.

In the summer of 2019, the district church representatives of the partnerships met with the leading theologians for a seminar in Lützellinden and vividly presented the mutual encounters. A „partnership consultation“ with visits of the partners from all corresponding countries in the church district was envisaged. The theme is „Unity in faith in a world of division“ and is based on the Bible verse „With my God I can leap over walls“ (Psalm 18:30). This meeting, which is planned to last several days, is intended to point the way forward for the partnership work.

The idea of creating a corresponding journal also arose during this meeting. People from the partnerships give a small insight into the history, projects and goals of their work by means of texts and pictures. They tell why these encounters are so important to them. The journal is also available at the homepage of the church district 'an Lahn und Dill': www.evangelisch-an-lahn-und-dill.de. Translations and further information are also available there.

Uta Barnikol-Lübeck

Public relations officer of the Church district 'an Lahn und Dill'

February 2022



Botswana

Our partnership with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Botswana began as a result of an initiative of the synod in 1983, which on a proposal of the UEM was looking for international partners and was thereupon referred to Botswana.



Partnership agreement 2011 – 2021

Unazo Ohona (former DEAN of the northern church district und Thomas Netz (former chairman of Botswana-Committee Braunfels.

Much has happened since then! Especially the many encounter, including five youth encounters and just as many delegation trips to Botswana and the corresponding return visits to our church district in Germany.

Together we built a kindergarten, a counseling center for AIDS issues, inaugurated a new church in Maun and launched a chicken farm that now provides important income for our partners.

Of course, we should also mention the many musical projects that we developed together with young adults from Botswana, Germany and Namibia and performed in many communities in Africa and in our country.

Particularly noteworthy here is the musical „live my life“, with

which we were able to win the first prize of innovative partnership projects of our regional church in 2017.

Of course, other issues are on the agenda at the moment! Corona has Botswana firmly in its grasp, although the vaccination rate is now rising steeply at just under 30 percent.

Our partners offer counseling and guidance, especially to young people, and have already achieved a lot with the „faith against fear“ campaign.

People are slowly overcoming their fear of encounters and are coming back to the communities with masks and distance.

For the future of course we hope for more encounters and we are looking forward to the partnership consultation here in our

Partnership Botswana ELCB - northern church district and church district 'an Lahn and Dill' 1983 – 2021

church district for which these pages should nourish your appetite.

Until then, we will stay in touch via e-mail, WhatsApp and Zoom, because our partners are now very well equipped with technology and so we are regularly in contact and mutually well informed.

Our Botswana committee currently consists of 8 people, but can still tolerate growth, so whoever is interested in this beneficial international partnership and would like to work together, please contact us.

Thomas Fricke – chairman



Counseling center formerly Aids- now Corona counseling



Youth encounter 2017



Burkina Faso

Working Group „Brot für die Welt“ TIKATO



Fig tree by the dam

TIKATO development cooperation with Burkina Faso is a trademark in its almost 50 year history - beyond the church district at Lahn and Dill. Since 1974, a group of volunteers has dedicated itself to the partnership with all its various gifts and abilities. It became a loyal firm friendship through visits back and forth. The various people in Burkina Faso such as Pastor Samuel Yameogo, agricultural engineer Pastor Etienne Bazie (currently director of ODE), Michel Kabre, Michael Yanogo, Bernadette Kabre and others in the background have helped shape the bond of faithfulness and reliability, this partnership at eye level.

Importance for the communities

Many congregations provide for project collections in Burkina Faso. Press and public relations reflect the partnership in a lively way and inform. Through the encounter with visitors from Burkina Faso as well as the reports of TIKATO travelers after project visits in the Sahel country, the partnership gets a face. We ourselves experience how active Christians are there, how they give a future to the lives of their fellow human beings without regard to person or religion.

We can see that our support is being received and that the donations are contributing to a good future for the people. It is basically „help for self-help“: The ideas come from Burkina, TIKATO makes the start - often together with Bread for the World, mostly with ODE project office; on site the work to secure life is completed. The use of donations is always verifiable on site and in Burkina Faso.

History

In 1973, the world was startled by the news of „drought in the Sahel - famine catastrophe“. Nobody knew that in the riparian region of the Sahara sand sea people lived whose existence was threatened by lack

of rain: the cattle nomads lost their animals and the arable farmers their harvest. Huge amounts of aid rolled in: Columns of large trucks traveled the caravan routes through the Sahara, bringing food; „Bread for the World“ drilled wells to supply the people with water. The full-time social secretary of the Braunfels and Wetzlar church districts, Winfried Simon, mobilized congregations to donate. At the opening event, Bill Ramsey cut a Hüttenberg loaf of bread in a grand gesture: all people should have their „Daily Bread.“ The fundraising campaign was successful, but it was clear that the need could not be ended with one action. There should be a counterpart for further actions. Dieter Marx, BfdW secretary for West Africa, established the connection with Samuel Yameogo, who had set up the ODE project office on behalf of the Protestant churches in Burkina Faso. The first project proposed by ODE was the Tikato dam, for which a one-year church fundraising campaign raised 200,000 DM, one third of the construction costs. Active people joined together to form the „TIKATO Project Community“, which was changed to a synodal working group in 1990 by the district church press officer Heidi J. Stiewink, since then acting TIKATO chairperson. Since then, 189 projects have been supported: from schools for training craftsmen to kindergartens, school buildings, health and maternity stations, village pharmacies, women's further training in crafts, emergency aid - including now for internally displaced persons because of the murderous terror - and Covid 19 aid against the pandemic. Measures to promote ecological agriculture, which enable people to work out a future under the difficult conditions of their families, are a focus of attention. We support peacemakers, whose work becomes even more important as tensions rise in the country. For 47 years we have seen that the many small and large donations contribute to a good future for the people.

Heidi Janina Stiewink und Dr. Wilhelm Wilmers





Erfurt

From sponsorship to partnership



Dr. Ulrich Born, President of the evangelical synod
(evangelical church district Erfurt)

In GDR times, there were already very close relationships between individual congregations of the church district 'Erfurt' and the church districts 'Wetzlar' and 'Braunfels'. This was especially true for the Andreas parish in Erfurt. If there were visits, then of necessity mostly from West to East. But there were even joint concerts.

In the 1980s, a piece of scaffolding that was much sought after in the Erfurt church district was delivered from Wetzlar. Some time later, under the eyes of the Stasi - the headquarters were exactly opposite the St. Andrew's Church - a huge three-axle truck drove into Webergasse against the direction of travel in

order to transport „Schwalbenschwänze“ (dovetails) stacked on pallets onto the roof of the church by means of its own large crane. Immediately, the People's Police arrived to punish the traffic violation. The truck driver asked the People's Police officer into his cab and showed him its modern full equipment, including a functioning television set. The policeman was so impressed that he closed Andreasstraße for the return trip and guided the unusual transport vehicle safely out of Erfurt.

The exchange of experiences between the Protestant church districts in Erfurt and on the Lahn and Dill is proving very fruitful. Where there is a church in the „East“, church life is often more intensive, even more lively, than in many a western parish with many church tax payers. In the Erfurt church district, for example, there are 14 Protestant kindergartens, Protestant schools ranging from elementary schools and community schools to the traditional Protestant Ratsgymnasium, diaconal institutions with about 1,200 employees, intensive children's and youth work, 12 choirs, 4 trombone choirs, 3 children's choirs, and the Augustinerkantorei with about 140 active singers.

Of course, our partner districts are also affected by structural reforms. By the way, we also made an important future-oriented personnel decision in our district synod on November 13, 2021 with the re-election of Senior Dr. Matthias Rein. We look forward to another lively partnership between our church districts.

Dr. Ulrich Born, President of the evangelical synod

In 1980, senior Hellmuth Lausatz from Erfurt and Superintendent Dieter Abel from Braunfels met. They understood each other and a moving story began. The visits of Braunfels and Wetzlar to Erfurt in the 1980s are legendary. Their cars were fully loaded with building materials. Things that did not exist in the GDR. They rolled up and helped with construction work in Erfurt's Luther Park, a popular refuge for children, confirmands and young people from Erfurt's parishes on the outskirts of the city. Some of them still tell stories of digging pipes and doing other tangible things together.

Then came the fall of the Wall. Things went back and forth. The people of Erfurt went to Wetzlar and Braunfels, the people of Hesse came to Erfurt. Talks about God and the world, help, joint church services. Our partnership still lives from these visits today. I like to think back to the joint performance of the „Creation“ by Josef Haydn in the Wetzlar Cathedral under Cantor Bräutigam and LKMD Ehrenwerth on October 3, 2015. The Augustinian Cantorate of Erfurt and the Wetzlar Cathedral Choir made music together.

Impressively, Superintendent Rust told of his and our East-West history in the fall of 2019, when we celebrated 30 years of the fall of the Wall. On my last visit to the Lahn and Dill in September 2020, I took part in the service to bid farewell to Roland Rust on his retirement. On September 10, 2021, we welcomed Superintendent Dr. Sitzler and others from Wetzlar to our celebration service of „500 Years of Protestantism in Erfurt.“

We like to travel to Wetzlar and Braunfels and welcome our partners in Erfurt, e.g. to experience the Martini service on November 10 on the cathedral square. We are looking forward to the next meeting in summer 2022 in Wetzlar and Braunfels and invite our friends from Lahn and Dill to the Central Citizens' Festival on the Day of German Unity on 3.10.2022 in Erfurt. We exchange ideas and learn from each other, we praise God together and thus experience God's presence in his church.



Senior Dr. Matthias Rein (l.) and Superintendent Roland Rust



Alice Kahn, Senior Dr. Matthias Rein and Superintendent Roland Rust 2019 in the „Predigerkirche“ Erfurt

Senior Dr. Matthias Rein



Indonesien



Representatives of the district church partnership visiting children and young people in the orphanage Deborah in Silangge

For more than 30 years there has been a lively partnership of the smallest Indonesian Batak church, the GKPA (Christian Protestant Angkola-Batak Church) with our church district.

The original tribal area of the Angkola-Batak is in the south of North Sumatra (Tapanuli), where most of the inhabitants are Muslims. Nevertheless, there are also purely Christian villages in South Tapanuli. However, GKPA communities can also be found wherever larger groups of Angkola live, e.g. in Medan or Jakarta.

The GKPA strives to maintain a good relationship with the Muslim majority by inviting state and municipal representatives such as the regent and the mayor to its own festivals and gatherings. In addition, members of the GKPA are involved in interreligious dialogue. People talk to each other. This is the custom among the Batak.



Guests and hosts after the concert of the band Terangapi in Wetzlar

The GKPA owns an elementary school, an orphanage and a health clinic. The church provides financial support to families with school-children who have difficulty meeting the costs of school attendance (books, exercise books, school uniforms).

Regularly relaunched programs for children and youth, women's and men's work involve many members of the church in the activities.

Church services are well attended not only on important Christian holidays. They are often celebrated by the presbyters of the congregations, because one of about 50 pastors of the GKPA is usually responsible for four to five congregations. Because of the exceptionally bad roads in South Tapanuli, the pastor can only visit one congregation on a Sunday. In this way, many parishioners always feel responsible for their parish.

In the past almost 40 years there have been many contacts. Visitor groups from Indonesia have visited the Braunfels church district. Delegations from Germany have been guests in Indonesia. A few examples:

- A group of young Indonesian women who participated in a confirmation trip and a youth trip of the church district on Föhr, among others.
- Ephorus Adolv Bastian Marpaung and General Secretary Togar Simatupang celebrated a church service with us in Ehringshausen on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the partnership.
- A group from the church district of Braunfels celebrated „150 years of Christianity“ on Sumatra with their partners on Sumatra.
- The Indonesian jazz band „Terangapi“ from Jakarta played concerts in Wetzlar and Katzenfurt.

In 2023, the 40th anniversary of the partnership in Sumatra will be celebrated.

*Pastor Ulrich Ries, Katzenfurt,
chairman of the partnership committee*



Visitors of a church service in Padangsidempuan



Namibia

We are partners in Christ



Day Care Center: Children, educator, visitors

The partnership between the church district of Wetzlar and the church district of Windhoek / Namibia exists since 1980. At that time, against the background of apartheid in South Africa and Namibia, the district synod decided to start this partnership in order to better understand and support the people. Since Namibia's independence in 1990, there have been many opportunities for encounter, exchange and common ecumenical learning. Our churches and countries are very different, but in our faith we are united. The actions and encounters are organized for the congregations in the church district by the Namibia Committee. In the following, we present the partnership work in highlights:



View from Okuryangawa to Katutura

- Delegation visits
- Encounter Visits

Encounters with the partners

- Beneficial gala and partnership service on Pentecost weekend
- Booth „Church outside in Advent
- Public relations
- Friends of Okuryangawa: Support for the community in the care of preschool and school children in a Day Care Center

Information of the communities and support of the partners

- Youth exchange programs (also trilateral)
- Ecumenical learning exchange program (two young people worked in each other's country)
- choir projects (Bridgewalkers)
- Rev. Lorenst Kuzatjike as ecumenical co-worker in the church district

Exchange programs

- Construction of a solar plant on the roof of a church congregation in Namibia
- Basic income grant (BIG)
- Support for kindergartens and construction projects (playground, toilets, rectory, church building)

Joint projects

- Sudden illnesses of pastors eased by donations
- Corona Aids: Clinical thermometers, disinfectants, masks
- Drought relief

Occasional support



Encounter: People from Namibia and Germany 2013



Siena

The partnership with the parish of the Waldensians in Siena began in 1986 and thus enters its 36th year in 2022. The reason for the establishment of contact was the partnership of the city of Wetzlar with the city in Tuscany, 1100km away. Superintendent Theo Preis then looked for a Protestant congregation in Siena, so that the church district together with the city of Wetzlar could engage in partnership there.

The small Chiesa Evangelica Valdese di Siena offers a home to all those who are not Catholic and subscribe to the principles of the Waldensian Church. The church, which only received full freedom of worship in 1984, has always lacked the peace to develop its own dogmatics. The important thing was and is to witness the Gospel by life and deed in secret. Today the congregation includes Dutch, French, Americans, Asians and many Africans. Everyone contributes something of what is important to them. A fascinating example of integration can be encountered.



Jugendliche aus Wetzlar und Pfarrerin Milena Martinat

When the partnership began, the church in Siena was being renovated. Superintendent Preis and sexton Dallmann brought a small organ to Siena with unimaginable difficulties at customs. Since that time, every Sunday the Wetzlar organ accompanies the service singing. In 2019, extensive maintenance and cleaning became necessary for the first time,

which was made possible by a donation from the director of the Wetzlar Music School, Thomas Sander.

In the past 20 years, the youth officer of the church district, Rüdiger Henke, has played a major role in the partnership. I was happy to take over this task from him. The partnership lives on human contacts. On our side, this includes the Lotz couple and Annika Mirbach as the contact for the youth. On the Italian side, apart from the pastor Milena Martinat, there are Franco and Daniele Pavone (Siena), Paul Krieg (Casa Cares), Paola Reggiani and Andrea Melli (Florence).

Nearly every year a group from our church district went to Tuscany. We were accommodated in the recreation home of the parish, in Casa Cares near Florence. In Siena we were welcomed in a friendly way during the church service and afterwards we were entertained in a princely way. There were youth camps, parish camps, Juleica seminars, a trip of the parish council. A flute ensemble from Wetzlar, which won an award in the Jugend musiziert competition, gave concerts there, as did a project choir led by Jochen Stanke-witz for the 30th anniversary of the partnership.

In 2010 an Italian delegation was in Wetzlar for the last time. In Corona times we have stayed in touch through social media and active participation in online services in Siena and hope to visit again soon with a group of people in Tuscany, whom we have experienced in their work as uniting people, integrative and always with a focus on peace ethics.

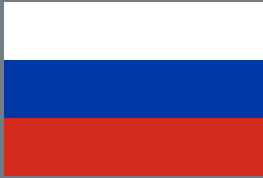
Pfarrer Christian Silbernagel



Franco Pavone mit Afrikanerin



Wetzlarer Orgel rechts Organist Daniele Pavone



Tambov

The Tambov partnership is based on contact with Russian Orthodox Christians. The history between Russia and Germany plays a role in this as well as the 70 years of communist dictatorship, which prohibited the church from parish, catechetical and diaconal activities apart from church services until the end of 1980.

The meetings, which take place at irregular intervals, make it possible to participate in the external and internal reconstruction of the church (worship, Sunday school, choir conducting, teaching at the new Orthodox high school, religious teacher training in new educational institutions, courses at the Spiritual Seminary and the Department of Religious Studies and Theology), as well as cultural institutions (Dershavin University, Polenov Painting School No. 2, Rachmaninov Conservatory of Music) and social diaconal issues and conferences, up to and including the work of NGOs with disabled people.

The confrontation with an different faith tradition and culture gives the own, familiar one a wider horizon through the wide spread arms of Jesus Christ - transboundary, strengthening, encouraging. Socio-political responsibility is perceived.

The partnership is part of an ecumenical concept. It is based on „trust and determination to build bridges of reconciliation, theological understanding, healing of memories and service to those most in need - that the world may believe.“ (Rev. Martin Junge, General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation)

*Ursula Küppers.
Vice chairwoman
Eastern Europe Committee*



Visit to archpriest Viktor Schaljnev.
In the background Michail Nikolskij



Icon painter Michail Nikolskij in his workshop
with the translator Sofia Pimonova

German-Russian Youth Exchange from 1996 to 2021

The relations between the YMCA District Association Wetzlar-Gießen, the Orthodox Church District Tambov and the Dershawin University in Tambov have existed for 25 years. From the beginning we have been conducting youth meetings in Russia and in Germany in alternation.

The aim of these encounters is to get to know the different culture and the traditions of the other country and to talk about different topics of life and faith. In doing so, we experience time and again how challenging, but also valuable it is to exchange and discuss opinions and convictions across cultural boundaries. We observe how young people develop interest and understanding for each other.

The youth encounters live from the practical elements, such as excursions to nature and sights, visits to museums and educational institutions, participation in different projects, sports and games, as well as creative-musical work. In the past, for example, we have been able to learn about various Russian painting techniques, create collages and pictures on biblical themes, and also sing and make music together. In times when things have become more difficult between our countries, we would like to make a small contribution to mutual understanding and appreciation.

Responsible for the youth meetings: Wilfried Faber, Gisela and Friedhelm Straßheim



German-Russian group at the „Peace Festival“ in Greifenstein 2019

Ursula Küppers

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