

BORDER LESS



MORE THAN JUST A PROJECT



Bund Evangelisch-Freikirchlicher
Gemeinden in Deutschland K.d.ö.R.
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Borderless – more than just a project

The Borderless project offers local churches the chance to invite co-workers and pastors from Africa or Latin America to Germany for a short-term service of maximum three months. This makes it possible to work together and learn from each other on a partnership basis. Especially Europeans can benefit and be deeply enriched and motivated by the natural missionary commitment, the faith and spirituality of Christians from Africa and Latin America. The unions deliberately decide to send the Borderless teams to Europe to work as pastors and missionaries.

Observations

During a service in one of the Berlin churches Rev. Fletcher Kaiya, Secretary General of the Baptist Convention of Malawi (BACOMA) once said: “We thank you for having brought the Gospel to Africa!” Maybe it is time now for the Gospel to be brought back to Europe? It is astonishing to see how the church is growing in Africa. This can also be demonstrated by the figures for church membership in the Report Book of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA):



BWA Statistics:

	1990	2003	2009
Africa	1.763.389	5.513.295	7.587.000
Asia	2.477.695	4.718.530	
South America	896.149	1.427.348	
Europe	762.667	793.615	

Moreover, we notice how the number of local churches with migration background is on the increase in Germany. The Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany has more than 209 member churches with migration background. World mission is no longer a matter for specialists. World mission starts in our own life or at the front door. We as Christians are invited to open ourselves to the diversity of worldwide Christianity. We can perhaps learn from our sisters and brothers in Latin America, Africa and Asia to enhance our Christian responsibility for the world and for mission, as Martin Thomas writes: “Christians from Africa, Asia, Latin and North America do not have any ‘miracle’ answers”, but their contribution can be valuable experiences, gifts, skills and new insights that may bring about new forms of mission in Europe.”

Experiences

Borderless Evangelizing

“When remembering the “Borderless Germany 2005” project, I find it easy – even after years – to talk about it with shining eyes”, this was said by Helmut Gohr from our Mission Department.

“An undertaking that was fascinating from beginning to end, fascinating because we had no experience



whatsoever, my English was more than poor, and also because we did not know how church members would react to the two missionaries from South Africa. But all doubts vanished after the first encounter with Benjamin Nguxe and Jeremiah Nyembe in Falkensee. From the very first moment I felt that they were genuine brothers in Christ, and I looked forward to the weeks during which I could accompany them through Germany. The main focus of their work was the Thuringia tent mission project “*RUCK2005*” which stopped for one week each at Sondershausen, Sömmerda, Ilmenau and Hildburghausen and the *Coast Tent* at St. Michaelisdonn. Through the intervention of these two “full blood evangelists” all five events had a very special touch. I will never forget the work at schools, street evangelization work in the pedestrian areas and of course their lively sermons during the evenings in the tent. I was especially impressed by their clear and uncomplicated message and the greater confidence that God is really at work. For one week, the two brothers were also my private guests. When after a very short while they addressed us as “Papa Helmut” and Mama Maria” we understood that far away from their own families we had become something like a home for them”. These are the words of Helmut Gohr.

Borderless theological work



Pastor Dr. Timothée Bouba and Jacques Moukouri, student of theology, had been chosen by the Cameroon Baptist Union to take on pastoral work at the local church of Berlin Steglitz. We jointly planned a series of bible study meetings with the following topics: The importance of fellowship, law and the gospel,

wholeness and salvation, grieving and remembering, and Jesus Christ. In all these topics we dealt with the question how African culture can be brought into harmony with the Gospel, as Arnim Hoffmann expressed it. "What has to be rejected as occult or pageant? What has to be integrated into the lives and teachings of African Christians, in order to preserve the socio-cultural identity of the people? And very important: the question which part should be played by us as German congregations in order to develop an autonomous African theology? The most important result in our church is the reduction of many prejudices over against African theology and Christian practice. Our guests were present in all church groups starting from work with children to senior citizens' fellowships. They readily answered all questions. The Sunday services were a bit more colorful. The church choir sang new hymns from Cameroon and the congregation happily joined in.

The sermons were translated, but the fire and enthusiasm in the preaching of Dr. Bouba and Jacques Moukouri captivated the audience. Meetings in families, joint meals and discussions were enriching for us. Understanding of each other has grown and personal relationships were established. Members of our church have meanwhile paid return visits to Cameroon. Our

horizon is wider and the commitment for the work of EBM in Cameroon has been strengthened.”

Joyful and vital living as Christians

In spring 2007, the Herford congregation experienced a special highlight. From March 20 to June 9 the two South African pastors Benjamin Ndebele and Chris Dikana were guest workers at the church. Their liveliness, passion and joy enriched the Sunday services, group work and the congregational retreat. Part of the program were also lessons in several schools, a prison service and many other events also in the framework of the regional and national union. “This intensive encounter and living together with people from a different culture and style of spirituality have impressed us, widened our horizon and challenged us.” This is how the Herforders’ summed up the experience. Chris and Benjamin again and again inspired adults and children through their liveliness and effervescent

joy by which they gave witness of Jesus’ love. This became evident in Chris’ impressive singing as well as in the sermons with a clear message. Their complete dedication and commitment for Jesus are challenging us here in Germany to be a clear light as Christians and to start moving. The



charisma of Chris and Benjamin was attractive and contagious, not only within the church but also in the town. Thus, both could pass on valuable impulses which will enhance the congregational life also in the future, e.g. regarding socio-diaconal work. The close relations that were established will be continued in spite of the large distance to South Africa. Dr. Andrea Wiedner summed it up with the words: “The visit has been a great encouraging gift!”

Borderless spirituality

In 2008, Joseph Fornah and Paul Conteh, pastors from Sierra Leone, spent three months at the Lüneburg Baptist church. Apart from Sunday services they organized group work, spent time with play groups, visited sick people, organized a drum workshop, participated in children's camps and eventually baptized two young people. "I am convinced that we need each other and can learn a lot from each other", these are the words of Joseph Fornah. The European churches had a much longer history, but "unless you do not put more emphasis on spirituality and try hard to reach young people, many churches will die in the decades to come". At the same time, the



missionaries were impressed by the social interaction in the church. There are no differences. Everyone joins in, also with dishwashing", Paul Conteh observed. The organizational structure of the churches with various tasks and responsible co-workers were considered a great

asset, but at the same time a more "active" Sunday service was missed. "We pray from the depth of our hearts, we dance and we pray loud. And you are all sitting on your chairs" Paul Conteh said smilingly. Due to their warm and uncomplicated way both pastors very quickly came into contact with church members of all ages, and through their clear sermons they provided impulses that will not be forgotten. We realized that mission is not a one-way road. Paul and Joseph have become bridge-builders and held up a mirror to us", that is the positive conclusion drawn also by Jürgen Bohle, pastor of the church. "The question as to how much time we should invest in the souls of our children will be on our minds for a long time to come".

Borderless local church work

From April to July 2009 they were in Germany. The Cameroonians Kadjo Magloire and Charles Egnamalouk worked as “short-time pastors” for three months in the churches of Backnang, Hohenacker, Göppingen, Urbach and Schorndorf. In addition they attended the EBM Mission Council and the General Meeting of the German Baptist Union in Hamburg, but they also visited the Elstal Administration Offices and co-operated in the EBM Preparation Course for Volunteers. Both of them were impressed by the



great variety of Baptist churches in Germany. Magloire is enthusiastic about “people being interested in the program and intercultural exchange – in kindergartens, schools, in homes for asylum seekers, but also when meeting people at church, in groups, during Sunday services, evening events or group work”. Charles Egnamalouk is surprised at the openness. “Many seek a personal meeting after an official event. These talks often end with the request for a prayer for personal/pastoral concerns.” Both pastors are grateful that on the basis of these contacts prayers were said for their churches, their country Cameroon and for their work and families and that a friendly relationship had been started.

Quotations

A few quotations from Borderless participants and receiving churches should illustrate the chances and challenges of this type of work:

“I wish people could set their feelings free and voice them and at the same time not neglect their mind. At some points ideas about morals, values, views, and ignorance should be reconsidered and the decision to leave traditional forms of service should be ventured. The congregations only need to be changed to the reality of service by allowing young people to participate in organizing Sunday services. We are learning from each other

and are thereby changed. The Baptist principles, the principles of worship, the structures and also the type of leadership should be reconsidered.”

Benjamin, South Africa, 2005



“German Baptists need to move from traditional to more charismatic worship. That will help them to gain more influence on people, especially the young ones. At times, people get tired doing the same thing over and over again; they are challenged when something new is introduced: A new way of worship and preaching will wake them up and help them to go ahead with the Lord. This needs to begin with the pastors of the German Baptist Union.” (...) If possible the elders of the churches, the region and the union should stop smoking and drinking; this would help the co-workers to follow the example of their leaders, and the difference between Christians

and Non-Christians in Germany will become evident.”

Jeremiah Nyembe, South Africa, 2005

“We thought we had come to the wrong church. It can’t be possible that German Baptists should go to church without their Bible!” (...) “Germany is the mother country of theology. Therefore, I always used to look at Germans as slightly “higher” Christians; however, I now have to correct this idea. I am convinced that we need each other and can learn a lot from each other. It is true that European churches have a much longer history, but that does not mean anything regarding their spiritual life. Unless you place more emphasis on spirituality and try hard to reach young people, then a lot of churches will die during the next decades”. (...) “There are no differences. Everybody helps, also with washing of the dishes. I was impressed by the way how adults deal with children. The gap between old and young is not as wide as in our society.” (...) “The organizational structure of the churches with various duties and responsible co-workers is a great asset. However, we do miss a more “active” Sunday service: We are praying from the depth of our heart, we dance and pray loud. And you are all sitting on your chairs.”
Joseph Fornah and Paul Conteh, Lüneburg 2008

“In a self-confident manner they raised subjects which were a challenge to us, e.g. about the Second Coming of Jesus, the danger of neglecting our soul, and gathering treasures on earth instead of treasures in heaven, but also reminding us of the task to teach children the basic principles of Christian life.

Jürgen Bohle, regarding Borderless service in Lüneburg in 2008

Organization

Borderless is organized jointly by the Baptist Union in Germany and EBM. It is also possible that several small congregations join hands for such a project. For the organization of a Borderless project it is important to formulate aims and



expectations, to draw up a task profile including a time schedule, which will set out the content or practical aspects of the requested service:

- Pastoral service in the church
- Work with groups, e.g. with children and young people, women ...
- Training of co-workers
- Project work: Social service, music, arts, sports ...
- Evangelization

Through Borderless it becomes possible to work on a partnership basis and to learn from each other. Thereby, Europeans can benefit in many respects from Christians from Africa and Latin America. Due to differing social and church backgrounds but also to a potential culture shock it is advisable to regularly reflect the common experiences and to learn from them.



The following requirements have to be met for a Borderless project to be organized:

Local church

- Description of working place, tasks and weekly plans
- Definite time period
- Organization of board and lodging including payment of costs
- Translation
- Mentor/attendant
- Pocket money € 100 per month and person
- Preparatory weekend for the church with the assistance of the Union and EBM and evaluation at the church

German Baptist Union and EBM

- First contact to partner union and mediation
- Conclusion of health and accident insurance contract
- Invitation and visa
- Contact person from church for questions of organization and preparation and as mentor during service

EBM partner union Africa and Latin America

- Nomination and mediation of co-worker in accordance with work profile
- Preparation before service
- Visa and flight costs to be taken over (subsidy from EBM and German Baptist Union may be applied for).

Finance

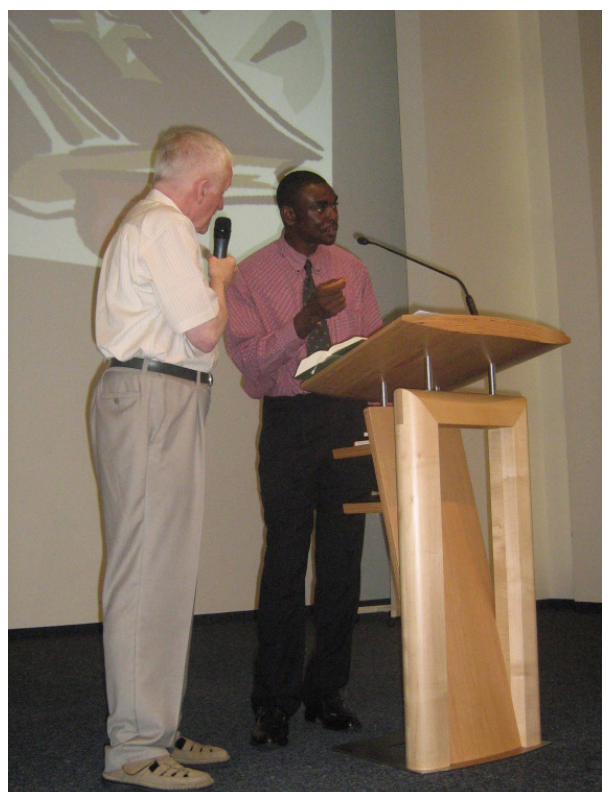
- The following costs may be expected for a team from Africa or Latin America for a three months' period (approximation):
- € 2,500 – 3,000 for flight/visa/medical preparation
- € 600 pocket money
- € 250 health insurance, medical care
- € 500 travelling expense in Germany, telephone and internet, other expenses
- According to the situation cost for board and lodging may have to be added.

Borderless – Check list for local churches

In European societies human beings often have to depend on themselves. In African societies people are living much more in a community. In Europe one person alone is in danger of becoming isolated. Therefore teams of two who will supplement and encourage each other during the service have proved of value.

1. The host church

The church must be well informed and prepared so that many will cooperate and the project will become a joint activity. In Herford e.g. something about the project



was said during each Sunday service two months before the arrival in order to awaken interest. In Lüneburg, information was also publicized in the church magazine and on the information board.

2. Tasks and activities

Borderless teams are sent out by their unions for a definite service: As pastors and missionaries. This is their self-image! Apart from the work description a corresponding time schedule (Excel table) should be elaborated, which will not only include the potential services but also allow sufficient time for the planning of contents, relaxation and for getting to know the Baptist Union, its various bodies and co-workers as well as the country and its people. Especially at the beginning the pastors should have the chance to “arrive” and in between they should be able to take a deep “breath”.



3. Contact persons

In addition to the job description which will have to be sent in good time the Borderless pastors will have to be introduced to their tasks and be mentored by the **person responsible** during their time of service. It is to be found out what co-workers will and can do gladly and to use them accordingly. Apart from all good preparation certain mutual flexibility will be needed.

During the entire service period a **mentor** should be available as contact person. This could e.g. be the church pastor. Thus, expectations, experiences or misunderstandings can be touched upon, so that short-term co-workers will have a chance to sort out their experiences and impressions. EBM and the Committee for World Mission will be at the disposal as contact persons during the process of preparation, implementation and evaluation.

4. Talks and discussions

For both partners of the Borderless program it is a privilege to jointly work in church and mission during a definite period of time. Therefore, the exchange regarding contents and experiences is especially valuable and helpful. During the talks we can cross-culturally learn to discover our faith in the one Lord. A joint interim balance, the evaluation of individual activities and an evaluation with all participants are extremely important.



5. Language and translation

Effective work and communication during the service at the church will only be possible, if interpreters are available. Depending on the home country the mother tongue may be English, French, Spanish or Portuguese. Translation will be required not

only during active service but also during events to be attended.

6. The arrival: Welcome!

At the very beginning when the pastors arrive a special welcoming event should take place at the church. All responsible co-workers of the church should participate. Apart from the official welcome (which can be accompanied by a snack) the church and its co-workers should be introduced. The guests should have the possibility to say a word of greeting. A welcome gift (e.g. city guide, transport guide, travelling guide (English, French), prepaid card, local delicacy would be a nice gesture.

A welcoming and a concluding service are recommended. Co-workers of EBM or KfW should perhaps be invited.

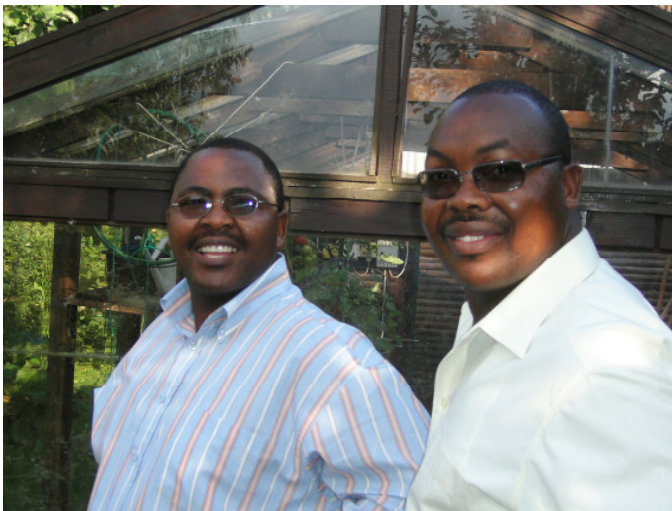
7. Sightseeing

In order that the guests might know where they are they should not only get to know the church (rooms), but also the town and possibly the surrounding area. A visit of the mayor, of other churches or local industry could be

planned. Also special cultural features should be presented and enjoyed. And: Africans love football ...

8. Lodging

Experience of past years has shown that it is important for the pastors to feel at home at one place and not be 'passed around' too much. They need a permanent place, where they can feel at home. They may go on trips/visits, but they need to know where they belong. The boarding question requires careful study. In this context it is an advantage to have a closer contact to one responsible person or a family of the church, but there



must be sufficient scope for private life. Apart from the basic equipment one should think of perhaps telephone, internet access, kitchenette, washing machine and television (English and/or French channels).

9.1 Board in general

In Herford as well as in Lüneburg the Africans were invited for lunch and supper in various families of the church. This was a great success! In this way they came to know many church members personally in a relatively short period of time and quickly felt at home among the congregation. They were no strangers. And it is an important token that houses and doors were opened to them. This hospitality and inclusion into the personal lives were described as a very positive experience. In case of self-catering it must be remembered that the below mentioned sum for shopping has to be paid.

9.2 Food and drink

During travels you experience a lot. Regarding the cultural differences it is (not) always an experience to eat or drink something you don't know. By and large our guests are invited to familiarize themselves with our culture and culinary variety. At the same time we ask to respect what is good for them



10. Clothing and linen

Possibly our “Borderless-guests” will find our climate and weather as “too cold”. In case their clothing is not adequate, clothes should be bought with them or be lent to them.

It is recommendable to put at their disposal a washing machine and to show them how to work it.

11. Medical care

If one of the pastors should fall ill, doctors should be consulted and the necessary medicine be bought. EBM is taking out an insurance for them with Eklesia. In case treatment becomes necessary, the cost is to be advanced locally e.g. by the church, and the receipts are to be sent to EBM. The respective amount will then be replaced to the church.

12. Communication with home country/Internet/Telephone

We ask the local churches to see to it that pastors can have regular contact with their families and congregations. This may be via Internet (perhaps Skype) or by phone, possibly also from the church offices. We ask to take over the corresponding expense.

13. Transport

Please, see to it that the pastors can easily travel from “A to B and C”. This may be organized by a car pickup service or – if there is a good public transport network – by public means of transport. Clear information must be given as to routes and tickets – e.g. validation, payment etc. The use of bicycles is not recommended.

14. Pocket money

Pocket money should not exceed € 100 per month (first payment at the beginning, thereafter at four weeks intervals). It is only regarded as a means of payment for hygiene articles, telephone cards and a few souvenirs to take home. If several churches are participating, there should be an agreement.



In case the pastors cater for themselves, an adequate amount should be put at their disposal. We recommend € 10 per day and person.

15. Future support

The support of projects in Africa and Latin America is always arranged and decided jointly by EBM and the partner union. A just distribution and strategic placement of projects in the home country and qualified and sustainable use of the funds are the criteria. There are always people who want to help. But it is quite possible that other EBM projects already existing in the country may be more useful for the most important tasks from the point of view of the home country.

We recommend not to give any cash beyond the pocket money or to make individual long-term promises for financial support.

The Borderless co-workers are often considered as privileged by their colleagues at home because of their stay in Europe. If they return with a lot of cash or get regular financial support the meaning and purpose of the project will be distorted.

We therefore recommend a transparent procedure with regard to finance with the participation of EBM and the partner union in Africa or South America.

16. Goodbye

At the end a joint evaluation should take place. Not only the activities should be reflected but also spiritual, personal and church aspects, further challenges for the respective partners, possibly also with regard to the continuation of a/the partnership.

A final worship service and a goodbye party will be appreciated by all.



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