



## PRESS RELEASE

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Association of Churches and Missions  
in South Western Germany (EMS)

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Giving Account of our Hope: Christian Witness in a Pluralistic World

### **„EMS Focus 2009-2012“ officially inaugurated in Ghana**

In June 2009, the Association of Churches and Missions based in South Western Germany (EMS) officially inaugurated its programme EMS Focus 2009-2012 in a festive worship service at the Presbyterian Victory Church in Accra, Ghana.

Under the motto „Giving Account of our Hope“, the worldwide EMS Fellowship will engage itself with the manifold possibilities of “Christian Witness in a Pluralistic World” for the next four years. Through four international activities and varying projects of the year, people can explore and experience in which ways the Christian hope can be proclaimed and lived out in the cultural and religious contexts of the 23 churches and five mission societies of the EMS Fellowship.

Participation in EMS Focus is expected to facilitate new experiences of faith through the encounter with people of other religions and cultures and enrich one’s own spirituality. The aim of the EMS Focus is also to promote joint initiatives for the protection of human dignity as well as the development of equitable communities and to develop a "Spirituality of Life". The EMS Fellowship invites churches, congregations and groups to come together and find answers to how Christians can be convincing and encouraging witnesses – testifying to the gospel of life in abundance for all people.

The opening worship service was held in conjunction with the meeting of the Mission Council – the international governing body of EMS consisting of about 50 members. Around 1,000 participants from several countries experienced how Christians from South Africa, Indonesia and Germany were a witness to hope – challenging and encouraging each other through their life stories and reflections and through Bible readings, songs and prayers.

#### **First Project: „Reading the Bible through the Eyes of Another“**

The first of the four international activities – a Bible reading project – was introduced in Ghana. In this project, different age groups engaging in an intercultural exchange with other partner groups, read and rediscover the Bible through the “eyes of another”. The basis for this exchange are texts speaking of the witness of hope, of ways of faith that go across and beyond cultural and religious boundaries and which also convey the message of respect for others. All group members will be involved through the method of “Bible Sharing”. Extensive work materials for congregation groups and also a workbook for children are available in German and English; communication via the Internet will be further expanded. Three years ago around 80 groups from Germany and several other countries were involved in a similar EMS programme on texts on peace and gave very positive responses.

#### **Further Activities planned till 2012**

A pilgrimage in the Middle East, an exchange of theological training centers and the networking of migrants’ centers are scheduled until 2012. A journey of faith to Jerusalem with participants from the EMS Fellowship

leading through four countries of the Middle East is in preparation. The group will visit holy and “unholy” places in this region which is important for Christians, Jews and Muslims alike and will meet with people of different faiths who work for peace and justice. New impetus for Theological Education in the presence of other religions shall be promoted by exchange among theological educators in the countries of the EMS Fellowship. They will share about their relationship with other religions with regard to content and teaching methods. The third activity aims at encouraging congregations to open up to migrants living amongst them and to deal with the root causes of migration. For this, migrants’ centers in the EMS Fellowship will be more intensively linked.

The “Projects of the Year” as part of EMS Focus want to emphasize “Christian Witness in a Pluralistic World” in the churches of the EMS Fellowship. “Learning to Live in Peace” is the theme for the project 2010 taking as an example the Schneller Schools in the Middle East. In the Schneller Schools Christian witness is given through the exemplary model of joint learning and peace education of both Christian and Muslim Youth.

### **EMS Focus Introduction in Germany on September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2009 in Frankfurt**

EMS Focus in Germany will be presented in a festive service at St. Katharinenkirche in Frankfurt / Main on September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2009. The sermon will be delivered by Cordelia Kopsch, the Deputy Church President of the Protestant Church in Hesse and Nassau (EKHN). Further representatives of the Protestant churches in South Western Germany and other countries as well as guests from other religions will take part. Also in other churches of the worldwide EMS Fellowship, official kick-off events will take place to invite congregations to participate in the international activities of the EMS Focus.

**The Association of Churches and Missions in South Western Germany (Evangelisches Missionswerk in Südwestdeutschland e.V. (EMS))** is a network of 23 churches and five mission societies located in ten different countries in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Europe. It strives for worldwide mission and ecumenical cooperation.

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