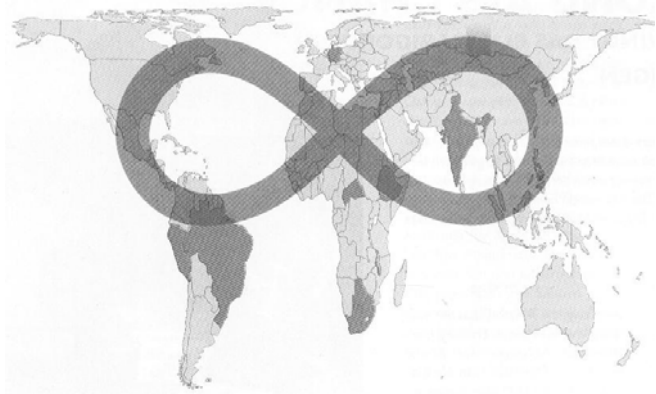


# Ecumenical Direct Partnerships

## Global Church as local experience

For parish work, ecumenical, worldwide direct partnerships present one of the most concrete and promising possibilities of taking a look over the horizon of one's own parish. Through direct partnership, parishes experience a change of perspective. They learn how to see themselves from the perspective of their partner parishes abroad.



Church is experienced as a “Global Player” that covers the whole world and connects people who live their faith locally at their respective places.

Whether in Johannesburg/South Africa or in Hanover/Germany, in Tranquebar/Southern India or in Sao Leopoldo/Brazil, people find themselves spiritually connected to the living God and challenged to design their life in accordance with the example of Jesus. Within that worldwide reality of discipleship ecumenical direct partnerships:

- facilitate direct contact and personal interaction between parishes in Germany, Africa, Asia and the rest of the world.
- make it possible to concretely experience faith in the God of the Bible within a worldwide horizon. The “poor and suffering” of the so-called third world become people – sisters and brothers, teachers in faith.
- open up direct, tangible and personal ways to fight poverty, hunger and injustice in the world. Direct contacts between people as well as development projects between communities can make a difference on grassroots level.
- let parishes experience through partnership visits how globalization changes our daily lives substantially on all continents. Unjust global economy structures get names and faces – globalization gets humanized and its effects on people become visible.
- help through a change of perspective to value one's own social and economic problems in a different way as we see us in comparison with the rest of the world.

From a historical point of view, ecumenical direct partnerships originated from a church movement on local level dating back to the seventies of the last century. Initially, only a few German parishes established direct partnerships with



parishes overseas. The first partnerships were established with parishes from Tanzania and South Africa. But as time went by the number of partnerships increased. Today, in the regional church of Hanover there are nearly a hundred partnerships between church districts, parishes, church institutions of South Africa, Ethiopia, the Central African Republic, Brazil, Peru, India and many other countries.

At first, the idea of sponsorship dominated the relations between German parishes and parishes in the southern hemisphere. The German partners were giving while the overseas partners were receiving. But it became clear over time that cooperation which is based on a partnership relation is about learning from each other on the same level. Therefore partnership starts by seeing each other as equal partners. In addition to that partners stand shoulder to shoulder in working towards a better world, where God's will is going to be done.

Most of the practical partnership work is done by volunteers who commit themselves to partnership committees on the level of parishes or church districts abroad as well as in Germany. Through their commitment they keep up contact to the partners abroad and partnership gets alive. Exchanging letters on a regular basis, mutual visits, partnership services, different kinds of projects and last but not least regular prayers for each other make partnerships a reality on local level.

The regional churches of Hanover, Brunswick and Schaumburg Lippe strongly support partnership work. Among other things there are the regional church's partnership guidelines that are supposed to be a first introduction to this work. Furthermore, the regional churches have established a partnership desk at the Evangelical Lutheran Mission in Hermannsburg that helps with and supports everything concerning partnership work.

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