



Hoffnung schenken  
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## Favour with God



I rush along the busy streets, carrying all kinds of things. It's Advent and Christmas is just around the corner. Christmas is considered a festival of love. This is expressed in the fact that one thinks of one's loved ones with a gift.

Admittedly: For me, finding the right gift is always a huge hassle. Chocolates, homemade soaps from a good friend, a CD with a new Christmas recording or books from the bestseller list. Here the rule is: if you have a choice, you're spoiled for choice! I don't even want to talk about wrapping the presents. Let me just say this: my gift-wrapping skills are more like modern art.

How does the following sentence sound "You have found favour with God"? (Luke 1:30 b)

Here a person was given a gift, not one with a big red bow. I am talking about Mary, who was going to receive a very special gift. What was her reaction? She was shocked at first when the angel stood before her in all his splendour and said to her: „You have found favour with God.“ Then she finds out what that means: the grace is revealed in the following verses, in which she is told a promise. She is to be given a special task. She is to become pregnant and bring the Saviour, Jesus, into the world. Mary does not receive the promise because she had lived a special life, distinguished herself by her exemplary religiosity

and her own actions. The decisive thing was: God chose! He chose in her a person he turned to and chose for a mighty task. - Grace is a gift for Mary!

We humans still find grace today. Not like Mary, but nevertheless it can suddenly go through me like through the marrow of my bones. Possibly after reading a biblical text through which Christ speaks directly to me: Christ who forgives and reconciles me with God and my neighbour. No special religiosity or deeds are necessary for this. It is simple and yet so difficult: God chooses! He chooses me and turns to me in Christ and thus in grace. Grace is a gift for me!



photo: Sabine Entschel

The grace of God is a special gift that comes from God and applies to every human being. Grace is not something that is only valid during Advent or Christmas. It applies all the time and every day anew.

I wish you a blessed Christmas season and thank you for the past year 2022, in which we were able to give "Hope to children" together.

Sincerely yours

Ulrich Mang  
Secretary for Social Missionary Services

# With God on the road in India - 12<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> of September



It was like coming home! On the 12th of September, Federal Executive Director Simon Schuh and I arrived in Bangalore/India at 1.30 a.m.

A busy itinerary was waiting and in front of us stood Mahima Krupa, the personal assistant of our partner Paul Sethu, with arms wide open: „Welcome back!“ From the airport it was a 45 minute drive towards the city center to our office.

The next morning we met Paul Sethu, talked about the developments in India and the situation of Christians in the country.

In the afternoon, we left for a meeting with David Livingston, a former graduate of our programme who now works for a chemical company in Bangalore and heads the human resource department there. At this meeting we not only experienced great hospitality and gratitude from our host, but also how much empowerment has happened through our programme in the past.

After our return, an in-house workshop took place with a speaker from UNICEF-India, who described the situation of young people in the villages and at the same time pointed out new inspiring approaches. It became clear that India is a country with a young population, as about 30 to 40 percent of the population are young and want to be involved.

The next day we went to Tamil Nadu to visit different projects. In addition to an evening with college students full of dances and songs, a meeting in a girls' dorm was on the agenda. I was impressed by how the young people in all projects not only get access to education, but also experience a lot of love from the staff. One encounter particularly touched me: It was a young girl in a red dress - from a population group called Gypsy, who is on the fringes of Indian society - and has been in our programme for almost 15 months. She was notable for her excellent language skills in English, her gratitude and her request to accept the gift she had made - a necklace. We gladly accepted this gift and were able to share a thought with her: "It doesn't matter where you're from. What

matters is that you are loved by your parents and by God. You are gifted, so use your gifts!"

In the afternoon we were again able to take part in an expert discussion with professors of social work. The topic was youth and village development. The cooperation with the scientists is to be expanded.

We were also able to visit former projects in southern India, which will be used in a new way for our work. It became clear to me that a reorientation of our work in this area must continue to focus on the villages. Details will be developed in the coming months.

On the way back to the college, we were able to get to know a potentially new project in the south.

From there, we flew north again for a national conference in Hyderabad to expand networks and get inspiration for the future. After three days of conference, we flew back to Frankfurt. It became clear to us that we were not travelling alone on all the paths, in all the conversations and journeys, but that God was travelling with us - in India.

The next trip is planned for spring 2023.



**YOUR SUPPORT HELPS CHILDREN AND STUDENTS IN OUR PROJECTS:**

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# Nepal: New partnership with New Horizon School

SMS Germany has started new partnership New Horizon school in Simara, south of Nepal. Around 60 % of the students who are already attending the school are from poor economic background. The parents barely manage to feed their family, so sending their kids to school is a burden. Of course there are public schools providing free education, but the quality of education is not good. Nanda and Abhishek have left their well-paid job in Hyderabad/India (one of the tech-cities of India) to open a school in a small town in the plains of Nepal. Often they have to look at the faces of these tired parents when they come to pay the due fees, which often has been due for months, and feel sorry to even collect these fees. The late fees also mean the teachers can't get paid

on time and difficulty in paying the monthly bills.

Nanda and Abhishek have been supporting a few such students from their own income but now with the generous support from SMS Germany 104 students (50 % of the total) have full scholarships! The parents are overjoyed and Abhishek is grateful to have the financial support which means consistent income, paying teachers on time and free thinking about the development of the school.

Also SMS Germany will be supporting the development cost of adding a classroom, the purchase of updated teaching supplies and an inverter

for the school. During the summer it gets over 100 °F (37,8 °C) and not having an inverter is a challenge as power cuts are frequent in Nepal.

Thank you for this great blessing and we are excited to bring to you more exciting updates!



## Christmas Cards

A Christmas card is enclosed with this newsletter. We would be happy to send you more cards. For this we ask for a donation for the Social Missionary Services – IBAN DE50 5206 0410 0000 8003 25 – reason for payment: Kst 113.



## Christmas in India

Although India is a Hindu country, almost the entire population celebrates Christmas. The most important part of Christmas in India is also attending midnight mass. Churches across the city carry nativity scenes, Christmas trees and coloured lights.

### Christmas Preparations in Churches

Planning for the Christmas programme begins in October or November. Each Christian family is visited by a small group of carolers with instruments. The communities rent minibuses or cars to visit people in their homes during the night until early morning. They sing some Christmas carols

and pray. Through the songs they bring the good news of the Saviour's birth. This is a very important activity during the Christmas season all

over the country. Snacks are offered in every house. Many Hindu and Muslim neighbours also wake up and enjoy the music. Some of them even invite people to their homes for some Christmas carols. Each church takes care of the poor in the neighbourhood and distributes small gifts, food or clothes.

### Christmas Celebration within the Families

One month before Christmas, the families start preparing for Christmas: a major cleaning is carried out and the house is decorated with coloured lights and balloons. Sweet dishes, such as rice pudding and a traditional Christmas cake, are prepared and shared with the neighbours. The whole family gathers for a feast consisting of biryani (savory rice dish) and kebabs.



## Do You Have Postage Stamps?

Every one of you gets letter mail! With the stamps on the envelopes you can support our work.

For many years a friend of CE has been collecting stamped stamps. The proceeds of these brands flows directly into our work.

### Our requests:

- Collect stamped stamps.
- Promote it in your communities and counties.
- Then send the stamps to us. We pass them on collectively.

**Thank you very much!**

## Cleanup Day

On September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2022 we had our Cleanup Day. Some CE groups as well as other groups took part in this social missionary project. They cleaned up a piece of forest, the playground next door and distributed some sponges with a „cleansing“ message to those who were interested.

For next year we plan again a Cleanup Day. Make a note in your calendars – **16<sup>th</sup> of September 2023!** For more information visit our website [www.ec-sma.de](http://www.ec-sma.de).



## Go, Harry, go!



Harry Wedekind, CE Vice President from Europe, will be travelling on his racing bike to the CE-World Convention in Mücke in July 2023.

You can find more information about this fundraising campaign for the CE World Association and SMS of the German CE Association at: [www.ec.de/go-harry-go](http://www.ec.de/go-harry-go)

## St. Nicholas campaign



St. Nicholas is traveling in South Asia! He is on the road in India and Nepal.

The increase of costs after Corona and in times of the Ukraine conflict is particularly noticeable in these countries.

The simplest things of everyday are no longer affordable for many families. That's why this year we are collecting for sports shoes and sweaters for the children in the projects.

Please support St. Nicholas! With your donation of € 20 he can put together a package. Help so that sports shoes and sweaters reach the people.

### Give hope - better together!

You can send your donations to: „11230-SMA-Nikolausaktion“ to: DE50 5206 0410 0000 8003 25 BIC: GENODEFIEK1

## Encounter retreat in Lithuania: Meet & Greet



We would like to give you the opportunity to get to know Lithuania and meet other young people. We will not only explore the beautiful landscape, but also have time for encounters. Be part of it!

**Period:** 28.02.-07.03.2023

**Organiser:** Saxon Community and EC Association, German EC Association

**Further information:**

[www.erf.de](http://www.erf.de) > Reiseangebote > Litauen or from Ulrich Mang



**ENTSCIEDEN FÜR CHRISTUS**  
SOZIAL-MISSIONARISCHE ARBEIT

### Ulrich Mang

Director Social Missionary Services  
Phone +49 561 4095-114  
Fax +49 561 4095-214

### Sabine Entschel

Sponsorship program coordinator  
Phone +49 561 4095-111  
Fax +49 561 4095-211

[info@ec-sma.de](mailto:info@ec-sma.de)  
[www.ec-sma.de](http://www.ec-sma.de)