Anglian-Lutheran Society Conference Hamburg

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'A Changing Church in and Age of Migration'

Report: The African Centre Borgfelde

by the Rev Prince Ossai Okeke (Pastor)

Background and Mission

The African Centre Borgfelde is an institution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church District of Hamburg-East. It serves as a place of hospitality, encounter and fellowship for Africans, Germans and people of all backgrounds living in Hamburg.

The Centre is committed to building bridges across denominational, cultural and linguistic boundaries. Its work is guided by the conviction that diversity is a strength and that peaceful coexistence grows through mutual respect, dialogue and shared responsibility. It seeks to contribute to peace and social cohesion in the city of Hamburg.

Worship and Spiritual Life

Worship is a central part of the Centre's community life. Under the motto "Different Colours. One People.", international services bring together Africans, Germans and guests from different parts of the world.

Services are held in English and German and provide a space in which people can pray, give thanks and share their faith. Different spiritual and cultural expressions are welcomed. At times, these expressions may differ in pace, volume, music and participation; however, they also offer an opportunity to learn from one another and to experience the richness of a diverse Christian community.

Gospel Choir

The Hamburg Gospel Ambassadors are a German African gospel choir connected with the African Centre Borgfelde. The choir performs in the International Gospel Service at Erlöserkirche Borgfelde every second Sunday of the month. 11am – 12.30pm

Led by Hamburg gospel musician Folarin Omishade, the choir meets weekly for rehearsals in the church. Through music, the choir strengthens fellowship, supports worship and creates a visible expression of intercultural Christian life.

Programmes and Community Activities

The African Centre Borgfelde offers a range of intercultural activities for members and interested visitors. One of these is Café Mandela, which takes place twice a month in the parish hall. It provides an informal setting for meeting, conversation and mutual support.

The Centre also offers a German-African confirmation class for young people. This

programme gives young people from different cultural backgrounds an opportunity to explore Christian faith, identity and community together.

Pastoral care is another important part of the work. Through the ministry of Pastor Peter Mansaray and Pastor Prince Ossai Okeke, migrants receive spiritual guidance, personal support and accompaniment in different life situations.

Partnership with the African Christian Council Hamburg

www.africanchristiancouncil.de

An important partner of the African Centre Borgfelde is the African Christian Council Hamburg, which has more than 60 African Churches as members. The Council brings together a broad network of African and international Christian communities and contributes to the visibility, representation and coordination of African Christian life in Hamburg.

The partnership creates opportunities for shared worship, networking, pastoral cooperation, community events and advocacy for the concerns of African and migrant communities. It also helps to strengthen relationships between African-led churches, established churches and wider civil society.

Christ Ambassadors Ministries International

www.christambassadorsministries.de

Christ Ambassadors Ministries International is also a partner church based at the African Centre Borgfelde. It is an international church with a Pentecostal background and contributes actively to the spiritual and community life of the Centre.

The church holds a welcoming Sunday service every week from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. The

services are characterized by live music, prayer, fellowship and the sharing of personal testimonies. Members have the opportunity to speak about their experiences of God's love, grace and faithfulness in their daily lives.

Through its worship and pastoral community, Christ Ambassadors Ministries International offers spiritual encouragement, belonging and support to people from different national, cultural and social backgrounds. Its presence adds to the Centre's diversity and reflects the broad range of Christian traditions represented in Hamburg.

Challenges of Working with Diverse Partners

Coexisting and cooperating with different church and community partners can also bring challenges. The participating communities have different denominational traditions, leadership structures, worship styles, theological perspectives and expectations of cooperation. Language differences particularly between English and German speakers affect communication and participation of the joint services that take place in the center.

In addition, partners have different priorities and levels of capacity. While some communities focus strongly on worship and pastoral care, others place greater emphasis on social support, youth work, integration or public advocacy. Coordinating programmes, sharing responsibilities and ensuring transparent decision-making therefore require patience, trust and clear communication within the partners.

There are tensions around visibility, representation and access to resources. It is important that all partners, including smaller communities, are heard and respected. Cooperation should not be based on one group directing others, but on mutual recognition, shared responsibility and partnership on equal terms and these are the constant challenges that we face in the center.

Conclusion

The African Centre Borgfelde is an important place of intercultural and ecumenical life in Hamburg. Through worship, music, youth work, pastoral care and partnerships including the African Christian Council Hamburg and Christ Ambassadors Ministries International, it promotes fellowship across cultural and denominational boundaries.

Its diversity brings both significant opportunities and practical challenges. Continued dialogue, transparent structures, respectful communication and a commitment to working together as equal partners are essential for building a sustainable, welcoming and peaceful community.

Sources

www.afrikanischeszentrum.de

www.africanchristiancouncil.de

www.christambassadorsministries.de

International Churches Convent in the Northern Church (ICCN)

The International Churches Convent in the Northern Church Germany (ICCN) is a network of 50 international congregations in partnership with the Northern Church. It is anchored within the Ecumenical Office of the Northern Church in the area of Intercultural Ecumenism.

Spiritual Foundation

The work of the Convent is substantially grounded in the biblical passage John 17:21: "... that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me."

Why This Work? – Our Motivation

- The future is diverse: We do not have to wait for the future; we can and must actively shape it today.
- Stronger together: No church can meet today's challenges on its own—we need one another.
- Building relationships and broadening horizons: Ecumenical work connects congregations, opens new perspectives and relationships, encourages mutual learning, and enables churches to support one another in times of challenge.

Key Areas of Work

- Networking: Connecting international congregations with one another, with the Northern Church, and with partner organizations.
- Relationship-building: Developing and sustaining long-term, mutual relationships across cultures and denominations.
- Education and capacity-building: Strengthening congregational life through targeted seminars, workshops, and training opportunities.

Our Themes

- Shaping the church for the future together
- Designing intergenerational worship services and building bridges between generations
- Pastoral and ecclesial responsibilities in society
- Resources and identity: values, cultures, and faith life in the diaspora
- Intercultural learning, education, and encounter

Network and Partnerships

The Convent maintains a broad network that includes:

- 50 international congregations within the Northern Church region
- The Intercultural Pastors' Convent, with exchange and cooperation among seven further regional conventions across Germany: Berlin, Frankfurt, Bavaria, North Rhine-Westphalia, Stuttgart, Hanover, and Hamburg
- BFP (*Bund Freikirchlicher Pfingstgemeinden* / Assoziation of Free Pentecostal Churches)
- KaMiG (*Konferenz der Mitarbeitenden mit internationalen Gemeinden* / Conference of Staff Working with International Congregations)

- Himmelsfels Academy
- Academy for International Ecumenism

Projects and Activities

- Workshops and seminars: On current theological, social, and practical topics relevant to congregational life.
- Intercultural Coach Training: Equipping church leaders and staff to facilitate intercultural processes.
- Ecumenical visits: Shared encounters and mutual exchange through visits and learning experiences.
- Joint worship services: Celebrating faith in ecumenical and cultural diversity.

Benefits of Cooperation

Cooperation between the International Churches Convent and other partner communities offers many benefits:

- Stronger community and belonging: Cooperation creates a welcoming network for Africans, migrants, Germans and international guests. People can find fellowship, spiritual support and practical orientation in a new environment.
- Sharing of resources: Churches and organisations can share rooms, equipment, musicians, volunteers, information and organisational experience. This makes it possible to offer more activities with limited resources.

- Greater visibility: By working together, The North Church and the international churches can make their contribution to Christian life, cultural diversity and social cohesion in Hamburg more visible.
- Mutual learning: Different denominational and cultural traditions enrich one another. Lutheran, Pentecostal, African and international expressions of faith can broaden understanding and encourage respectful dialogue.
- Improved pastoral and social support: Partners can refer people to the appropriate support, whether they need pastoral care, counselling, help with integration, youth activities or community contacts.
- Support for young people and families: Joint programmes such as confirmation classes, music activities, community gatherings and family events provide spaces where younger generations can develop faith, identity and confidence.
- Stronger advocacy: A broad network, such as the International Churches Convent with its more than 50 Churches as members, can speak more effectively about the concerns of African, migrant and international communities in churches and public life.
- Peacebuilding and integration: Regular contact across cultural, national and denominational boundaries helps reduce prejudice, build trust and promote peaceful coexistence in Hamburg.
- A richer worship life: Different styles of music, prayer, preaching and testimony make worship more inclusive and meaningful. The live music and personal testimonies in services, for example, allow people to share faith and experiences of God's grace in a personal way.
- Shared responsibility: Cooperation encourages partners to work together for a common purpose rather than in isolation. It strengthens accountability, participation and partnership on equal terms.

Organisation and Contact

Area	**Details**
Institution	Ecumenical Office of the Northern Church – Intercultural Ecumenism
Contact	Pastor Prince Ossai Okeke, Officer for International Congregations
Address	Shanghaiallee 14, 20457 Hamburg, Germany
Email	p.okeke@nordkirche-weltbewegt.de