

End-of-year-report

2020



**KIRCHE AM START**

... und die Stadt blüht auf!





LIONEL

# Staying on Track



## Dear Friends of Kirche am Start,

I want to invite you to revisit the year 2020 with me. In hindsight, I am especially pleased that we have managed to stay on track despite the pandemic and many other unforeseeable events.

Like many other churches and fellowships, we currently gather online or in very small groups in any way possible. Nevertheless, our house churches have developed. We were able to develop digital offers that will stay relevant in the future. Our goal for 2020 was for our church to take strong roots, and that is precisely what happened. The pandemic muddled up a lot, but we have found: When a goal is set, we stay flexible and adaptable in how we achieve it. We might have to take some detours, but we still reach our goal.

In this annual report, Marie and Lars present all the planned events we were able to execute. Sandy informs you about the daycare, its current status, and its ever-growing network of helpers. And finally, Manuel shares how a sudden crisis turned into a blessing for the city.

„... and the city starts to bloom” was our motto. And it remains so. Accordingly, this report holds stories of growth and the statistics and numbers that go along with it. It introduces you to people who shape KaS and paints a picture of how God is moving in Offenbach. Welcome to the annual report of 2020.

*Lionel Bendobal*



MANUEL

# Bags for “Die Tafel”



Hoarding dictated the start of the corona pandemic in Germany. Especially toilet paper and pasta went out of stock in many places. Some were frustrated, others amused. Christine Sparr could not laugh about the circumstance. The head of “Die Tafel” – a non-profit organization in Offenbach realized immediately: „Now, our customers won´t get any food.” And that´s how it was. Supermarkets and discounters could barely supply to the Tafel anymore. One food distribution location in Offenbach had to close as early as March 2020 and the second one was about to fold. The situation was frustrating: Resources to distribute decreased rapidly and many helpers were forced to give up their honorary office because they were part of the high-risk group. The visitors were desperate: “And what are we supposed to eat?”

KaS has been working and partnering with “Die Tafel” for a long time. It became obvious: Some-

thing had to be done. Manuel animated others to help through the event “Being Charitable” which he promoted via social media. The general idea behind it: As many people as possible fill another bag of groceries during their next shopping trip and deliver it to “Die Tafel”. The event barely costs 10€ for the individual shoppers but can save the customers of “Die Tafel” from hunger.

The miracle happened. In the following days, the Tafel was literally flooded with groceries. The staff didn´t even have time to organize the products anymore and simply brought them to the warehouse. Some helpers delivered singular bags, others hampers, and some had filled the boots of their cars to the brim. Everyone gave what they were able to give. Manuel happily recalls: “For the individual, the event wasn´t a big burden but through many tiny deeds a lot can be accomplished.” Over 30 KaS-members and





visitors participated. The voluntary participants from Offenbach can barely be counted. The initiative went on for a good month- and the customers of “Die Tafel” could be well supplied during the shortage.

The whole proceedings were a wake-up call. Additionally to the many helpers, institutions and firms also participated in the initiative. The volunteer center in Offenbach immediately joined the efforts, just like Jumpers and the free evangelical church Offenbach. So did the players from Kickers Offenbach, and even Honda donated two cars to transport goods or chauffeur customers to “Die Tafel”. One question dominated the dialogue: “How can we help?” Not only was “Die Tafel” able to stay open- in 2020 they received the highest amount of donations in their history. Many of the new donors are still active now. They regularly drop off goods and simply state: “I started last year, and it has become a habit.”

KaS partners with existing networks in long-term projects. That is how spontaneous procedures such as this are possible. There is trust, there is connection, and a willingness to work cooperatively. Especially the costumes of “Die Tafel” have observed that. They saw how the shelves emptied rapidly and their hope for food shrank on the daily- likewise, they witnessed how KaS and many people in Offenbach came to their rescue. Christine Sparr emphasizes: „I am so thankful for everything! I was highly surprised by the willingness to help after the call to action by KaS! The solidarity and the absence of neglect were incredible.” An elderly lady who frequents “Die Tafel” adds: „Thank you. I don’t know how I can ever repay this service. I am very thankful!”

Manuel highlights: „‘Die Tafel’ does immense and wonderful work- and if they need help, we´ll be there.” With the initiative „Being Charitable “ KaS did not merely strengthen the collaboration locally but could pass on encouraging impulses to people who are not used to this level of involvement.

[...]

## “HOW CAN WE HELP?”



A photograph of a person from behind, wearing large black over-ear headphones. The person has short, dark hair and is wearing a dark blue, textured sweater. The background is blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting. A vertical red bar is on the right side of the image. The text is overlaid in white.

DOMINIK

# Coming to Faith at KaS



Dominik is 16 years old and still goes to school. Until recently, his life was defined by his friends and his gaming console. But then the young boy with Croatian roots was given a youth Bible in his confirmation classes. This was a new beginning for him. He started reading the Bible even though he did not understand everything.

“I was practically pulled into the book,” he says now. In addition to the Croatian Bible, he bought a German one. The more he read, the more his hunger for the word grew. “What does the internet say about faith?”, he asked himself. He read articles, listened to podcasts, and watched service live streams. During one of these live streams, the presenter explained the Good News and invited all viewers to invite Jesus into their lives if they hadn’t done so already. Dominik said the subsequent prayer and knew: Something just happened. On the same evening, he phoned his cousin and told her: “I don’t know what’s happening but I want the best for everyone and love every single person.”

Shortly after, the pandemic started. So, Dominik continued to get his input from the internet. He fought with bad habits and actively took measures against them. He grew in faith.

Eventually, he asked himself, whether there were other believers in Offenbach. During his search, he found KaS. What he read on their website sounded good. He wrote an email to Lionel and the contact was established. They mailed, talked over the phone, and met up. Now, Dominik was able to ask his questions more personal and direct than before. Here, he met others who also lived their lives with Jesus.

Simultaneously, he shared his newfound faith in school and with his family. He received positive feedback from some (“I can see that something about you is different.”) and was rejected by others (“What are you doing with such .. stuff?”). Some “friendships” ended. Even his parents are still not convinced that their son’s new way is pointing in the right direction. But Dominik is certain that he has found what he has always been searching for.

For countless months, Dominik had been following the KaS-services online. Then he was faced with a question: „Could you imagine actively contributing to our services?” Currently, he is being introduced technical team’s work and will probably start cutting the first videos soon. He experiences KaS as a place where he is welcomed as he is- but where he does not have to stay that way.



LIONEL

# Kirche am Start online



KaS had online offers before the pandemic. How has that developed in 2020? “It was exciting because we implemented many things we wanted to start anyways,” Lionel says regarding the online presence of KaS. “Nowadays, churches have to offer digital spaces. The only question was: “What is most meaningful and logical for our church?”

The highlight is KaS’s church App. It is much quicker and more flexible than any newsletter and a simple option to announce dates, ask questions, and put forth any offers. Since we were able to use a finished template, we did not have to spend much time on programming.

If you want to know what KaS is up to at the moment: Simply download the app in the Apple

or Google Play Store (Search for “Kirche am Start”). 85 others have already done so and use it regularly.

Prayer is another aspect that works astonishingly well online. We used to gather during the week and for one hour of prayer, we usually spent just as much time in the car or on the bicycle. Meanwhile, we pray regularly via Zoom, and after a short phase of acclimatization, it works beautifully. Meetings with the different departments of the church are much shorter and more effective- although this option solely works for briefings.

KaS’s courses and seminars of faith used to be online even before 2020, at least partially. We did not want anyone to miss a part of the





course, so we had recorded the elementary content on video. We extended that system. Now, the courses are completely online, on-demand, whenever someone wants to use them.

These changes, however, do not represent a complete shift of KaS's work into the digital realm. Meetings in which fellowship is crucial cannot be held online. During the first lockdown, we experimented with pre-produced video services but this format left no room for true togetherness or participation. By now, we have adopted a two-pronged approach: The sermon can easily be pre-recorded as a video, at the same time some visitors can be present in Ostpol during our "watch-party". Even in the zoom meetings the viewers can gather as small groups in digital breakout rooms after the ser-

mon and pray for each other.

But how does a missional church build a relationship with other people? Online? That can happen (please refer to Dominik on page 6) but generally, it has worked as in previous years: A pregnant woman from the neighborhood was unable to get up for weeks and could not go grocery shopping by herself. So, members of KaS went for her. Nothing about that has changed. Therefore Lionel confidently says: „Missional church has to be embedded in people's everyday life - then it can survive challenges like a pandemic.”





**GOTT ERLEBEN**



**EINANDER ERMUTIGEN**





**HIER HANDELN**



**DIE STADT BLÜHT AUF**



SANDY

# En Route to Day-Care



„Kirche am Start is an answered prayer for Obertshausen.” Such statements delight Sandy. A long path lies behind her and her colleague Peggy. Alongside an incredible team, they are actively working on a day-care in Obertshausen. Slowly but surely the project is taking on form. Technically, the day-care was supposed to open in autumn of 2020, but Sandy knows: “Due to the pandemic and the usual delays on construction sites we are half a year behind schedule. We didn´t hope for it but it is not overboard. “

The Christian day-care with a focus on movement and intercultural education is a project from KaS. In spring 2020 the city Obertshausen confirmed their support of the project and KaS was able to sign a lease and start the renovation of the commercial building into a day-care

center. Now, things got practical: Walls were put in, power lines placed, and sanitary facilities built. Here, 40 children between the ages of 3 and 6 will find a place of learning and playing by May 2021. During the last year, Peggy and Sandy were supported by a voluntary team of educators which competently accompanied the first steps of founding the day-care. Education researcher Tabea and pedagogue Jenny are currently working on the precise pedagogical concept. „We are more than excited about the great collaboration in our growing teams and the growing professionalism of our day-care,” Sandy says. In the course of this year, new nursery school teachers will follow.

Lionel has to laugh when thinking about the whole process: “During my theology studies, no one told me that my work would entail sitting in





the town hall and negotiating with the mayor.”

How does such a building project work during the lockdown? “Astonishingly well,” Sandy says. „We have experienced many blessings. KaS and the inhabitants of Obertshausen took over work which saved us time and money. Everybody told us: You won’t find a construction company. But that was not a problem. We received plenty of support from local firms that strongly accommodated us.” Obviously, we did encounter problems along the way. For example, our architect’s Covid infection precisely in November when construction was supposed to start. Suddenly, our most important consultant was missing. We were planning a ventilating system that still had to be integrated and the executing firms had questions we were unable to answer. At that point, we experienced one of many miracles.

One of the craftsmen who knew nothing about our architect’s illness called his bureau and conferred with a colleague. Until that point, we had thought our architect was working alone. Then we found out that he had a colleague who was perfectly incorporated into the project. She was our rescue.

The parents’ help and the regular contact with them were especially exciting. They desperately wanted another day-care to be built in Obertshausen. If everything goes as planned, the day-care will open in May 2021. Then, children will get to know Christian values as much as their own and other cultures. Fascinating is what parents from different cultural and religious backgrounds have been saying from the beginning of the project: “You give us hope.” This amount of trust delights all the staff at KaS.





LARS

# House Church Creative



At the beginning of 2020, Lars and Marie started a new house church at KaS. Their goal was to complement the already existing house church of family Littau in the city center. Their house church was overflowing with attendees, so much so that their living room was not sufficient anymore. Like them, Lars wanted to live in fellowship, invite people and make faith tangible through it. In contrast to Manuel and Jutta with their children, they wanted to offer a quieter environment. But everything came differently: Directly after the house church's start came the first lockdown. Additionally, Marie got pregnant and meetings without children were not an option for much longer.

Nevertheless, they started. They met with a few, went on walks, and prayed with each other. Lars recalls: "The whole time we thought that

after the Covid-restrictions we would really get cracking but then the second wave hit. Then it became clear: We need creative solutions." So, together with Marie, he started asking the group about their needs. The most common answers were tranquillity and fellowship. Is it possible to practically meet these needs through Zoom meetings? During the Advent season, they met for „evenings of stillness “. They planned how they could reduce stress in the Advent season (no advent calendars was one of their solutions), they shared their families' Advent and Christmas traditions and one participant played songs on her saxophone. It was different than usual, but it was good. Via Zoom, they tried to practically have fellowship by organizing wine-tastings. They invited neighbors, friends, and colleagues- several came.





Many ask themselves how to invite people to church's online offers. Lars however wonders: „How can we carry the dynamic of our zoom



meetings over to the next time we meet in person?" Many have gotten used to the short

evenings- one or two hours without driving anywhere. And qualitatively much was possible. To the wine-tasting for example they invited a friend from the USA who could judge the wine's spirituality competently- such a highlight would barely be possible in a normal setting.

Lars makes clear: „There is no one way to get through this time as a house church. At KaS everyone has found their way. Whether as stated above or by meeting on public playgrounds where the kids can play, and the parents converse from bench to bench.”




MARIE

# Taking Voluntary Action







Is church work allowed to be fun? “No,” Marie says vehemently. „It has to be fun, otherwise it ceases to be after a while.” She gained this insight when she attended a postgraduate course in non-profit-management for KaS. Am I allowed to profit from my honorary office? Marie found it fascinating to apply these questions about volunteer management to KaS. She found many contributors who were excited about their work. But several were frustrated and solely endured their frustration because they wanted to build god’s kingdom.

Soon it was decided: KaS would offer training on the topic “My life. My honorary office?” Marie promoted it with the motto: „Egoist or Idiot?” This was a provocation. But quickly the seminar proved how practical its content was. Everyone was enthusiastic. Due to the pandemic, the four-week seminar was held online. The seminar considered different motives for voluntary work, for example competition. At first glance, the motive does not seem to fit into the church environment. At second glance, it becomes clear that a day-care center would not be in the realms of the possible without people who view obstacles as challenges and fight to reach their goal.

The first course in summer was attended by 30 KaS-members. They were specifically asked: Are you happy with your current task? Does it

suit you and your strengths and needs? Or do you want to join another team and take on a different role? Some used the opportunity for reorientation.

One participant happily reflected after the course: “It was important to know my strengths so that I know where I am in good hands and what I want. I have realized how important it is to take yourself seriously.” At the moment, most teams are resting due to the pandemic. But they are excited to apply what they have learned.

In autumn they offered the course again- this time inviting participants from outside the church. By now, the volunteer center in Offenbach has inquired if they can send their helpers to participate in the next course. The work is making waves. Marie is excited: “No one has to sacrifice themselves by volunteering, but we are allowed to enjoy it. And when we are at the right place with our strengths and needs, the church starts to bloom, because we ourselves blossom.”



# 2020

## in numbers

Here is a representation of the year 2020 in numbers. When we look at the overall outcome and the details on the next page, three aspects make us especially happy: 1. Despite Covid, you have entrusted us with more donations rather than less. Thank you! 2. We were able to end the year with a surplus that we plan to invest in our new church location. 3. As we hoped, KaS finances more and more of their own work- currently 30%. We are cultivating a culture of giving and

-by giving 10 % of our own donations- one of generosity.

Thank you for the solidarity, love, and encouragement you show through your donations. We are richly blessed by it and believe that God will bless you too.

### OVERALL BALANCE

**EARNINGS**  
188.061,48 €

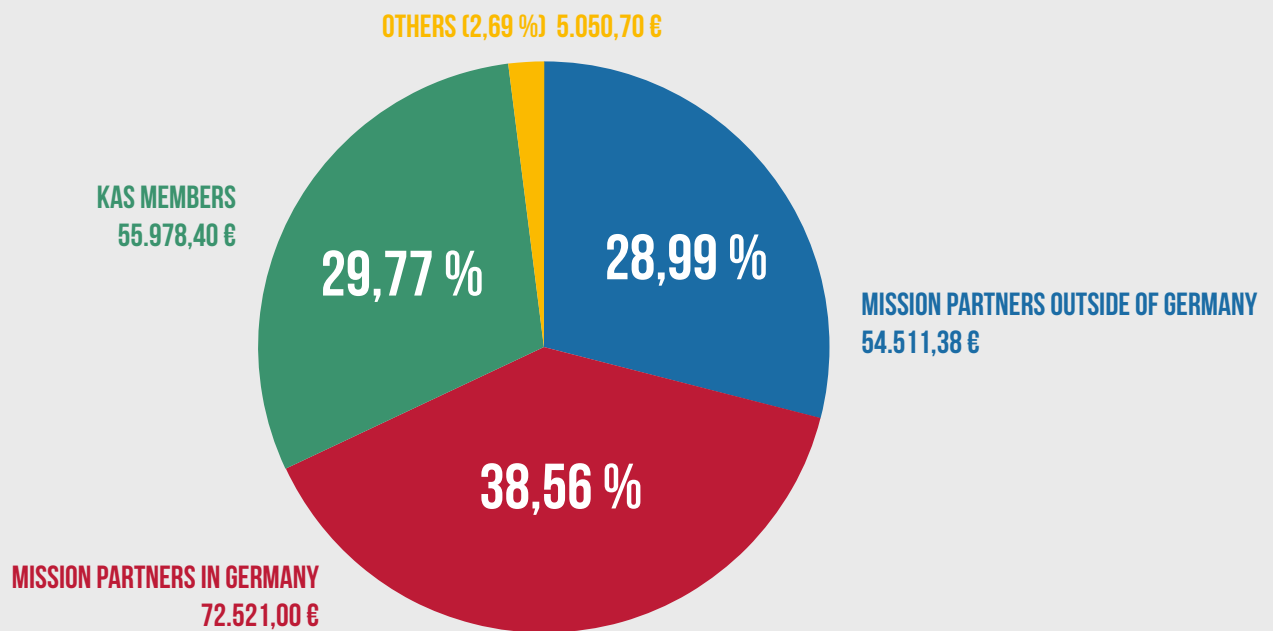
**EXPENSES**  
157.774,73 €

**RING-FENCED FOR THE FOLLOWING YEAR**  
15.000,00 €

**SURPLUS 2020**  
15.286,75 €



## Source of Revenues



## What did we spend the money on?

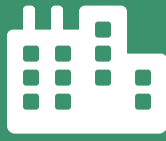
Wages	67.347,22 €	42,69 %
Legal Social Insurance	34.719,78 €	22,01 %
Employer's Contribution Payroll Tax	4.825,25 €	3,06 %
Rent	11.399,03 €	7,22 %
Consulting Fees	4.792,28 €	3,04 %
Advertising Efforts	8.966,10 €	5,68 %
Travel Costs	1.215,21 €	0,77 %
Office Supplies/ Administration	4.045,71 €	2,56 %
Money donated	8.822,06 €	5,59 %
Dues Anskar-Association	1.209,24 €	0,77 %
Insurance	219,85 €	0,14 %
Others / Further Training	10.213,00 €	6,47 %





**110**

PEOPLE IN 2 CHURCH SERVICES



**65**

PEOPLE ARE VISITED REGULARLY DURING THE PANDEMIC



**104**

KAS-MEMBERS, INCLUDING 30 CHILDREN

**30.652**

ONLINE MINUTES VIA ZOOM



**528**

MESSAGES SENT VIA THE CHURCH APP



**8**

HOUSE CHURCHES



**5**

PROJECTS



**6**

COOPERATIONS WITH ORGANISATIONS IN THE CITY



# Thank you to our partners!

Other than the countless individuals who are on our side, we are more than thankful to the churches who invest in us, and the organizations and companies, who have given us their trust.

## CHURCHES

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**Anskar-Kirche Hamburg**  
anskar-hamburg.de

**Cedar Springs Presbyterian Church**  
cspc.net

**Chrischona-Gemeinde Florstadt Stammheim**  
chrischona-florstadt.de

**Christus Centrum Tostedt**  
cctostedt.de

**EFG Bad Homburg**  
efg-badhomburg.de

**Elmbrook Church**  
elmbrook.org

**Ev. Stadtmission Friedberg/Hessen**  
stadtmission-friedberg.stamiglia.de

**Wasilla Bible Church**  
wasillabible.org

## ORGANIZATIONS/COMPANIES

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**KIN International**

**Plansecur Stiftung**  
plansecur-stiftung.de

**Wertestarter: Christliche Wertebildung gGmbH**  
wertestarter.de





#### Experiencing Church- Celebrating Unfolding

In 2021, we want to remember what church is and is to remain: A strong, spiritual community that sticks together. In 2021, our church is expanding: We are experiencing how God's light increases to shine in our city and spreads in our region- we celebrate this growth!

Our objective:

#### **A church living in connection.**

Additionally, to trust-worthy relationships within the scope of our house churches, we offer opportunities to become acquainted with the entire church community.

#### **A church living in unity.**

Our values are a personal gain for each and every one of us. They unite us and are worth being integrated into our everyday lives.

#### **A church unfolding its potential.**

Our church is expanding: Whether coaching for volunteers, the first elders "on trial", financial independence, or the forming of youth work- We want to evolve in all areas.

#### **A church celebrating multiplication.**

We are increasingly present in our neighbourhood. Across the borders of Offenbach, from now on we want to also reach the city Obertshausen.









**KIRCHE  
AM START**

... und die Stadt blüht auf!

EDITOR

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BANK WIRE TRANSFER

Here you can donate conveniently and quickly to specific projects and will receive your donation receipt by mail at the end of the respective calendar year.  
For this purpose we ask you to write in the line with the reference to include your address.

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IBAN: DE96 5009 2100 0001 6751 09  
BIC: GENODE51BH2  
Reason for transfer: Pastorentopf\_your adress

Banks name: Spar- und Kreditbank Evangelisch-Freikirchlicher Gemeinden eG  
Adress: Friedberger Str. 101, 61350 Bad Homburg v. d. Höhe