



PROTESTANT CHURCH IN BADEN

# BOUND IN FRIENDSHIP WITH CHRISTIANS AROUND THE WORLD



## Contents

- 02 **Baden** – Unique in so Many Ways
- 04 Living Traditions  
**At Home in the Present**
- 08 Friendship and Cooperation Across Borders  
**Building Bridges**
- 12 Ecumenism in Baden, Ecumenism Worldwide  
**Coming Together in Faith**
- 16 Religious Education and Development  
**Communicating Values**
- 20 Pastoral Care  
**Openness and Respect**
- 24 A Home in the Community  
**Celebrating Community**
- 28 Cultural Heritage: Music, Art and Architecture  
**Bringing the World into Harmony**
- 33 Facts and Figures

Cover Tobias Titschler Right David Hertle/Unsplash, A. Uppunuthula/Unsplash, AdobeStock



In the Flow of Life

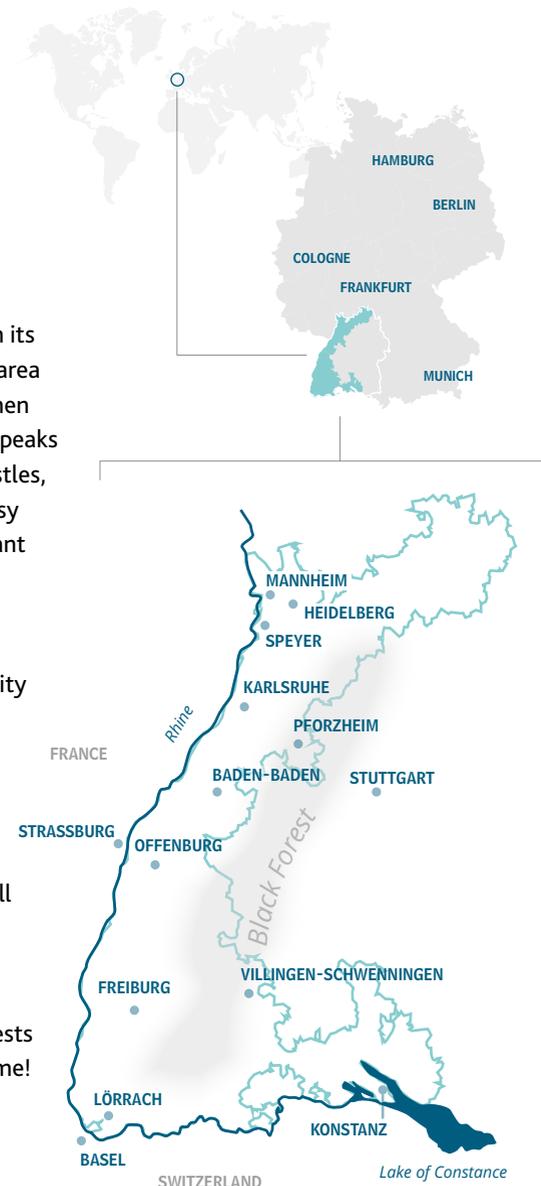
## Welcome to Baden

It can be said that water connects all things. The Region of Baden in the southwestern state of Baden-Württemberg extends along the path of the Rhine. This river springs from its Alpine sources and flows down into Lake Constance, in an area where people enjoy an almost Mediterranean climate. It then flows on to the Black Forest region with its high mountain peaks and medieval towns. Heading north past vineyards and castles, both the waterway and the region become increasingly busy and industrial before the Rhine leaves Baden near the vibrant and multicultural city of Mannheim.

And just like the river, the Protestant Church in Baden also has many different facets – from pastoral care on the city streets to centuries-old traditions in rural regions, from church services and moments of silent prayer, religious education and intercultural exchange all the way to international cooperations and worldwide ecumenism. Today, over 1.06 million people are members of the church, and are served by 1,021 ministers (approx. 41 % women) as well as over 32,000 employees in social welfare institutions, making the church an essential part of society.

Whichever aspect of the Protestant Church in Baden interests you most, you're more than welcome to join us – at any time! We look forward to many lively encounters and thought-provoking conversations to come!

Your  
Protestant Church in Baden



# Baden – Unique in so many Ways

Fertile lands and impressive natural reserves, centuries-old cultures, and border regions where nations live as neighbors – the climate in Baden is marked by many factors that have promoted growth and development, and have driven many advances. The same is true in the history of the church. The church has helped shape every region across the state and brought about many fruitful encounters. Whether in worship services, during cultural festivals or when singing and playing music together, the church has connected people throughout the ages and continues to bring them together today.



**Hymns of praise and joy:** Music has been an integral part of the spiritual life of the Protestant Church in Baden since its founding in 1821. Today, around 400 choirs with 13,500 singers inspire up to 350,000 people at church services and concerts every year.



**The Europe Bridge in Kehl:** The Protestant Church in Baden has taken advantage of its shared borders with France and Switzerland to establish various levels of cooperation with its Protestant neighbors. It has also established more than 100 partnerships with local Roman Catholic congregations and church districts, as well as churches across Europe and overseas.



**The municipal church of Durlach.**  
The Protestant Church in Baden encompasses 750 church buildings, each with a unique history, architecture and culture.

## The Protestant Church in Baden

The Baden of today was formed through the unification of several smaller territories in the decades around 1800. As a result, the government of this still rather young state and various forms of community initiatives and popular movements have attempted to reorganize the structures and bodies of the church.



- 1517** Martin Luther publicly posts his theses in Wittenberg and begins the Reformation
- 1518** Luther's Disputation in Heidelberg, early Reformation, e.g. in Kenzingen, Constance, Wertheim and Kraichgau
- 1555** The Peace of Augsburg
- 1556** Margrave Karl II of Baden-Durlach introduces the Reformation in his territories (under the principle *cuius regio, eius religio* – Latin for: "whose realm, his religion"). He becomes the spiritual head of the church in his region (Summepiskopat or sovereign church rule). Otto-Henry, Elector Palatine, introduces the Reformation in the Palatinate (Heidelberg)
- 1563** Publication of the Heidelberg Catechism as the most important confession of global Reformed Protestantism; many reformed immigrants arrive in the Palatinate.
- From 1699 on** Immigration of Huguenots, Waldensians and Walloons in Baden-Durlach. In the decades before 1806, the Margrave of Baden-Durlach inherits further territories, and is privileged by Napoleon
- 1806** The Grand Duchy of Baden already comprises 1,807 Lutheran and Reformed churches within its administration
- 1817** Unification of the Lutheran and Reformed churches in Prussia, 300th anniversary of the Reformation, further unifications in Hesse as well as the Left Bank of the Rhine Palatinate (1818)
- 1821** Unification of the Lutheran and Reformed churches in Baden, founding of the Protestant Church in Baden
- 1918** End of the First World War and with it the principle of Summepiskopat or sovereign church rule
- 1919** The constitution of the democratic Weimar Republic establishes a new relationship between church and state
- 1933–1945** National Socialism in Germany. The so-called "intact" or "undestroyed" church in Baden is neither ruled by the Nazis nor belongs to the Confessing Church
- 1971** The beginning of women's ordination; the first female minister serves in a parish/ congregation.
- 1973** Leuenberg Agreement in Hölstein near Liestal, Canton Basel-Landschaft

David Groschwitz, David Brandt/AdobeStock, Claudio Testa/Unsplash

# In my Father's house there are many rooms.

John 14:2

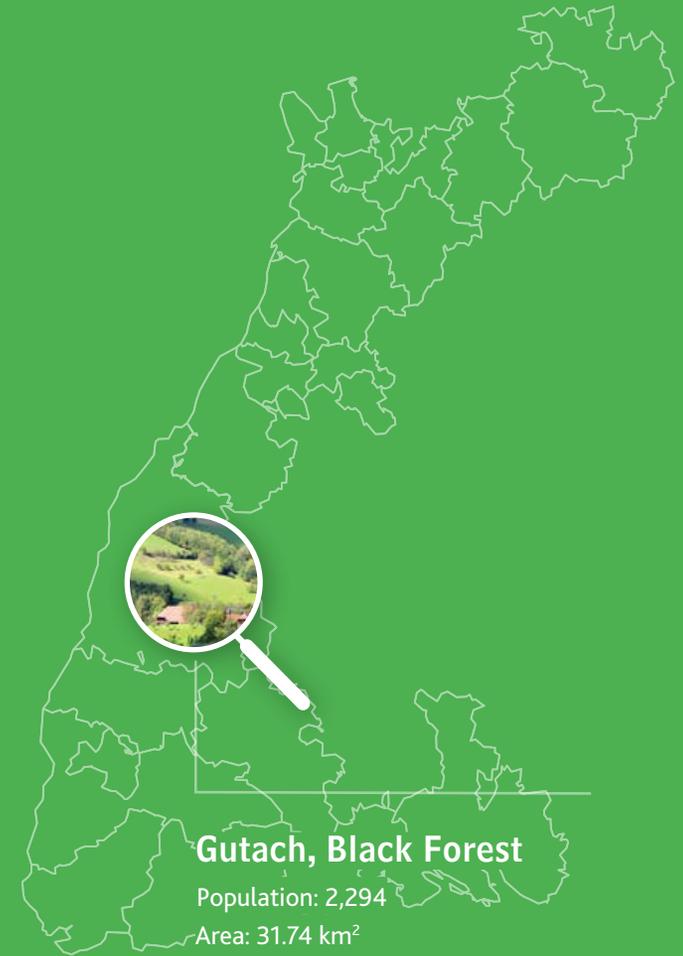


**The Black Forest is a place where tradition and modernity exist side by side.** Tourists recognize the Bollenhut as a symbol for the entire region. This hat was originally part of the traditional Protestant folk dress in the villages of Gutach, Rimbach and Reichenbach – and still is today.

For many people, church means belonging, identity, and a little piece of home. The church provides a home for the faithful and conveys a sense of security in the togetherness of the Christian community. As a regional church, the Protestant Church in Baden is active at many levels. It instills vitality and lends relevance to Christian values in contexts that are constantly changing. Listening, lending a hand, paying attention, setting common goals, advocating for others, and celebrating together – by building a bridge between tradition and modernity, Christ's Spirit appears in multifaceted forms, and carries God's message out into the world: "You are not alone!"

As a home, the church also has an integrating function. It welcomes people into it, and offers them a sense of value and warmth. The Christian faith connects people and creates cohesion, be it in an international women's café, in a support program for families, in the search for employment and housing, in an intercultural church service, or in a soup kitchen with attached hair salon. Whether in the city or the countryside, in joy or in need, in everyday life or at church festivals, the focus is always on encounters. It's in these shared moments that closeness is created, and people feel that they have finally arrived home.

David Groschwitz, Nicolas Picard/Unsplash



## AT HOME IN THE PRESENT



"The connection to one's homeland and heritage is visible in these traditional costumes and harvest wreath. The faith of our mothers and fathers is their tangible foundation."

Mirko Diepen, Minister (till 2018) of the Protestant Congregation in Gutach, Black Forest

Children dressed in folk costumes wave cheerfully as they are followed by the harvest wreath. The wreath is decorated with fruit and carried with pride and joy by young women dressed in a Schäpel (wedding costume) topped with a red Bollenhut hat. Behind them follow the musicians in the folk ensemble, as well as married couples in traditional dress (the women wearing a black Bollenhut), the mayor, church minister, church parish council, municipal council, and the board members of local guilds and associations.

David Groschwitz

The harvest festival in Gutach is a very special experience! Even for me, as a church minister, I feel moved by it every time. The connection to one's homeland and heritage is visible in these traditional costumes and harvest wreath. The faith of our mothers and fathers is their tangible foundation. And in a special and festive way we experience anew that solidarity that is already so present in our village.

The way that the spirit of our local community has been understood has changed, while still remaining valuable and important. In the old days, when fire, disaster or illness struck, people stuck together. Now, supported by the municipality as well as the Catholic and Protestant churches, neighborhood social welfare organizations extend this neighborly commitment beyond just the village limits to all those in need, and many volunteers are at work in countless homes.



**The Chapel of Encounter (Chapelle de la Rencontre) in Strasbourg, France, and the Europe Bridge across the Rhine** are two places where bilateral friendship and exchange have become concrete. Where once there was mistrust and conflict, now there is a growing sense of togetherness on both sides of the Rhine.

## Guide our feet into the way of peace.

Luke 1:79

Peace begins when we overcome that which separates us from others. A long history of cooperation by Protestant churches on both sides of the Rhine has played an important part in shaping friendship between Germany and France. Decades of work toward mutual understanding have laid a fertile ground out of which this neighborly relationship, cultivated over generations, can continue to grow.

The Protestant Church in Baden and the Union of Protestant Churches in Alsace and Lorraine have recently worked toward establishing pastoral partnerships, and have created binding structures for ecumenism across both sides of the Rhine, promoting an openness to other cultures, to other denominations and to new experiences. The successes here in Kehl and Strasbourg are representative for the entire region.

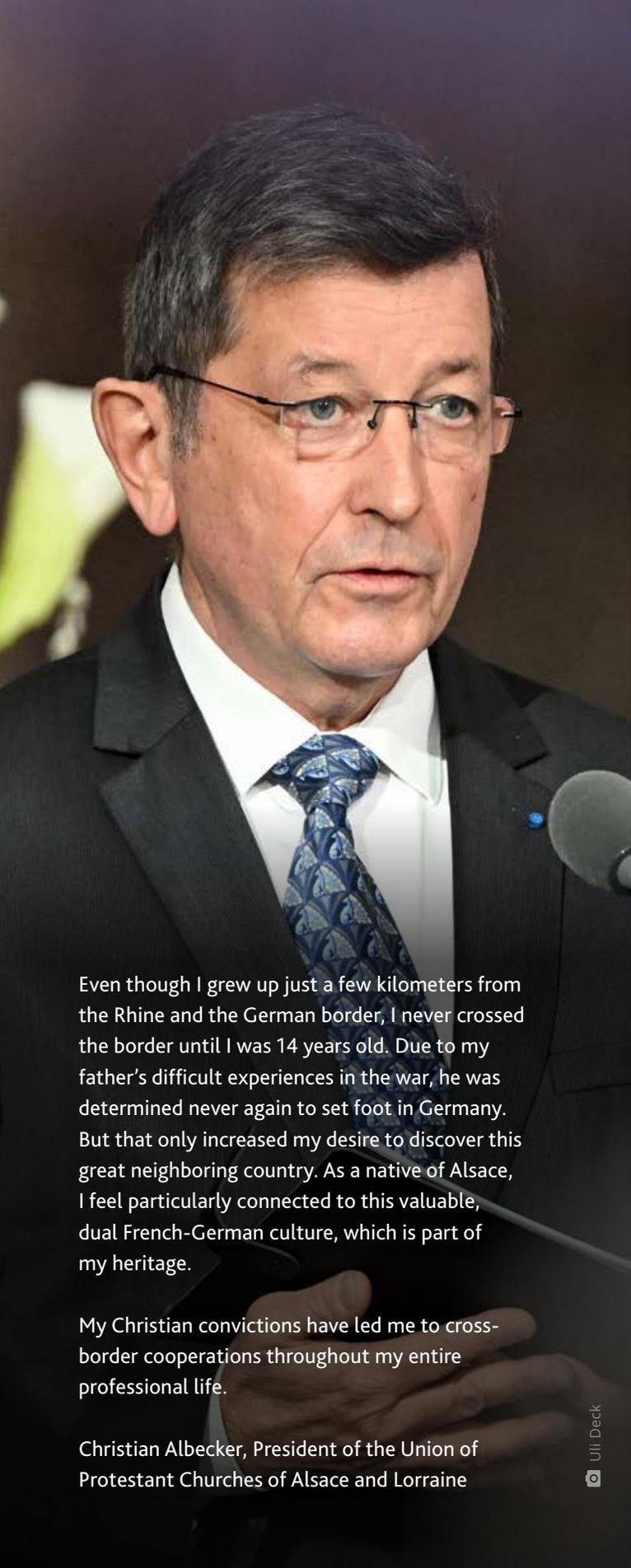
However, standing up for reconciliation and peace does not mean turning a blind eye to a painful past, but rather consciously remembering it. Special spaces are required for remembrance, such as the Peace Trail across the Rhine, the memorial in Neckarzimmern, memorials at the sites of former synagogues, or at concentration camps such as Gurs.

The synod regularly seeks dialogue with political representatives, and understands this to be one of its important roles. In times that have seen increasing xenophobia, continuing streams of refugees, and a growing number of global crises, it is more important than ever that Christians, Jews and Muslims set a visible example of unity, such as at the Mile of Religions. Everyone is invited, and everyone can make a contribution.

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# FRIENDSHIP AND COOPERATION ACROSS BORDERS



Even though I grew up just a few kilometers from the Rhine and the German border, I never crossed the border until I was 14 years old. Due to my father's difficult experiences in the war, he was determined never again to set foot in Germany. But that only increased my desire to discover this great neighboring country. As a native of Alsace, I feel particularly connected to this valuable, dual French-German culture, which is part of my heritage.

My Christian convictions have led me to cross-border cooperations throughout my entire professional life.

Christian Albecker, President of the Union of Protestant Churches of Alsace and Lorraine

Uli Deck

“Reconciliation and unity become possible when we are moved by the love of Christ, which is greater than that which is humanly possible.”

Prof. Dr. Heike Springhart



I grew up close to the German-French border. As a child, my parents and I visited the Hartmannswillerkopf Mountain in Alsace. Yet I found the fact that German and French soldiers had fought here just a few decades earlier completely incomprehensible. The dugouts and barbed wire remains left me with a queasy feeling. And then just a few years later, there was no longer any discernible border crossing at all when we travelled to France. Today it is hard to imagine that there was such a deep rift between Germans and the French.

This gives me hope for the reconciliation processes we face today. The Spirit of Christ unites us with our brothers and sisters in the churches of the worldwide ecumenical movement. And it sets us in motion toward each other and toward reconciliation. And one day, the world's children will also look with bewilderment at our past and present theaters of war.

Prof. Dr. Heike Springhart,  
Bishop of the Protestant Church of Baden



Archbishop Stefan Burger, Archdiocese of Freiburg, and Bishop Heike Springhart, Protestant Church in Baden



Inside the Mary Magdalene Ecumenical Church

Let there be no divisions among you, but be knit together in the same mind and the same purpose.

1 Cor. 1:10

Ecumenism is writ large in Baden. Protestants and Catholics meet here with a relaxed naturalness. In the pursuit of unity, peace, and justice in this one shared world, both churches maintain close relationships and engage in joint projects across borders and in cooperation with other confessions. Recent successes include representational ecumenism, where one confession represents the other, and the *Charta oecumenica socialis* (Charter of Social Ecumenism) – a joint endeavor by the two welfare organizations of the Protestant and Catholic churches, *Diakonie* and *Caritas*.

Philosophy and practice, thought and action are based on solid foundations. For example, the Working Group of Christian Churches in Baden-Württemberg discusses current ecumenical issues, plans research, and promotes interreli-

gious awareness. And the member churches of the International Convention of Christian Congregations dedicate themselves to the concrete demands of pastoral work as well as to the unique challenges facing congregations with different backgrounds and those worshipping in foreign languages.

“Bound in friendship with Christians around the world” – today’s ecumenical movement represents a worldwide network, of which the World Council of Churches (WCC) is an integral part. Bible Weeks, the World Day of Prayer, peace prayers or Evangelical Mission in Solidarity – the richness of faith, new challenges, and the motivation of many young people allows friendships to grow from these encounters, and for people to learn from one another.



Karlsruhe

Population: 313,092  
Area: 173.46 km<sup>2</sup>



“Love will move the world toward reconciliation and unity.”

Rev Eleanor B. McCormick

The Church of South India (CSI), of which I am a member, has been a “united church” since 1947. In due recognition of its tireless support to global ecumenism through dynamic leaders, as well as its creative partnerships in global ecumenical forums, the CSI is also fondly referred to as the “uniting church” of India. At home, it has been proactive in voicing the topical concerns of the voiceless and discriminated sections of society – such as Dalits, Adivasis, women, migrant workers, agricultural workers, landless, homeless and transgender communities. In 1989, in a bold move the CSI ordained Marathakavalli David, the country’s first female presbyter.

Prof. Dr. John Samuel Raj,  
Ecumenical Co-Worker from the Church of South India (CSI), 2017-2022

My family taught me that while following Christ can be a personal matter, it is never a private matter – it is meant to be shared. On Sunday mornings, my grandfather would say, “Maybe you don’t need to go to church today, but maybe someone needs to ask you to come.” The moral behind the message was simple: You can’t do this alone, you shouldn’t do this alone, we do it together. I love the idea of living our faith out loud. It is time to make public the fact that Christ is love and that love has moved and will move the world toward reconciliation and unity.

Rev Eleanor B. McCormick,  
Ecumenical Co-Worker from the  
United Church of Christ (UCC), since 2019

**The Protestant Church in Baden welcomes co-workers from the worldwide ecumenical community.**

They come from member churches of the Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS) and live and work as pastors for at least three years in a congregation in Baden. In this way, we build deep and intimate friendships as members of the worldwide body of Christ and learn from each other in spiritual life, through theological debate, and in our joint work on social issues.



Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 12:2

The church is there, accompanying children and young people on their way, providing youth with orientation, and offering adults assistance and new perspectives. Church as education and a religious lifestyle, and faith as the intersection between doctrine and lived experience – these aspects mutually enrich each other. Luther’s intellectual heritage as well as the Reformation’s educational ideal – the image of the mature believer, independently thinking about and reflecting upon their faith – have reached beyond church walls to become the foundation of a universal social education movement that has continued into the present day.

A guiding principle of the Protestant Church in Baden aims “to keep Christianity active in our culture through religious education.” This is reflected in a wide range of activities that encompass all age groups, and in joint activities such as those focused on environmental and climate protection.

Religious education in state schools provides a valuable space where young people can be engaged in discussions about the meaning of life. Organizations such as the Voluntary Ecumenical Peace Service (Freiwillige Ökumenische Friedensdienst, FÖF) or YMCA-Baden provide young people with intercultural experiences. And the diverse educational programs offered to men and women go far beyond purely vocational training or continuing education. All teaching and learning is focused on empowering people to take responsibility for themselves, for each other, and for our world.

David Groschwitz



### Gaienhofen Castle Protestant School, Lake Constance

Population: 3,480  
Area: 12.55 km<sup>2</sup>

## COMMUNICATING VALUES

A photograph of four young women in blue shirts rowing a boat on a body of water. They are all smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is a calm, light-colored water surface.

In the classroom or in joint projects, across all age groups and beyond one's own class, the spirit of the Gaienhofen Castle Protestant School thrives on cohesion. Helping hands and active support can always be counted on here. Bridges are built that make many things possible and allow students to grow beyond themselves. Young people quickly learn to take on responsibility and to care for others. Commitment, goodwill, attentiveness and respect are not just slogans, they are experienced here day after day in so many ways.

People may have slightly different ideas of what faith can and should be for them personally. God, Yahweh, Allah – there are many differences within and between religions, but also many similarities. But different ways of thinking can actually be enriching, and can help to solve conflicts. It's important to experience that.

I trust that I will be lovingly guided and held wherever my path leads me. Of course, we have to give life our own direction, make decisions, and work at shaping this life ourselves. But we can also trust in God and rely on the fact that helpful signs and signals will appear in times when we aren't sure how to carry on. It's important to remain open and attentive to these guiding signs.

Jesus invited people to help build the Kingdom of God with him. We are blessed to have this chance, and this responsibility, to shape this garden together.

David Groschwitz

“Different ways of thinking can actually be enriching, and can help to solve conflicts. It's important to experience that.”

Katharina Geßner, alumna, Gaienhofen Castle Protestant School

# Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep.

Romans 12:15

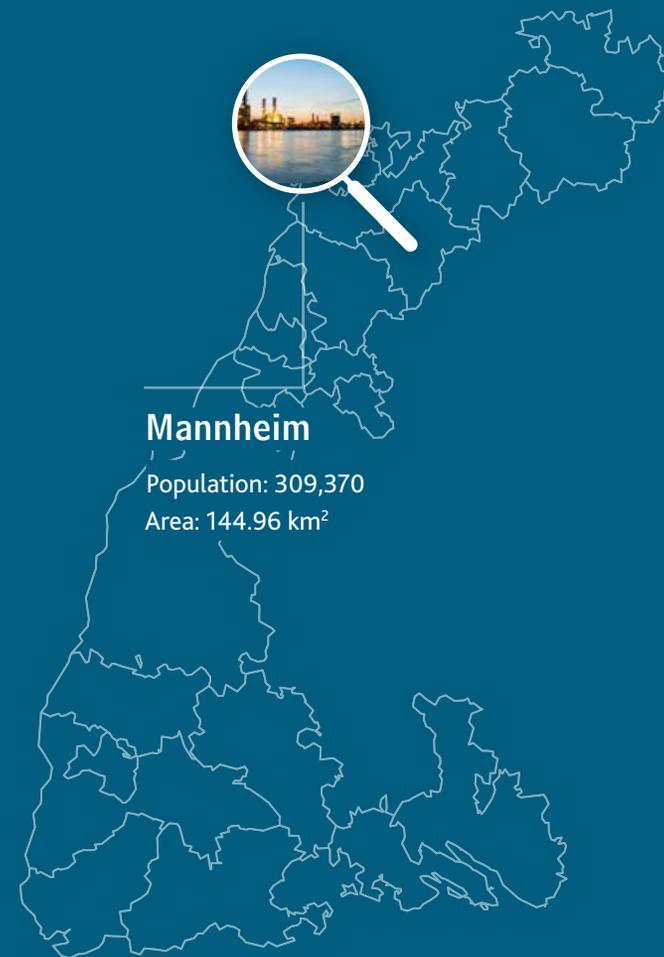


Being there, giving support, listening, being sympathetic, and giving others time: Pastoral care accompanies people through life and faith, especially in those hardships and crises that stretch people to their limits. It also supports people in many other situations. Pastoral care is a living gospel and as such is open to all people. We turn to our neighbor as a beloved child of God and focus on them as a person, regardless of their history, origins, or religion.

Wherever people live and wherever the church is present, people reach out for pastoral care – and not just within church congregations. People receive comfort and support in hospitals and retirement homes. In prison chaplaincy conversations, prisoners experience sympathy. In reception centers for refugees, new arrivals find a place to go. And chaplaincy in industry mediates between business and the church.

Pastoral care takes place day after day in many forms and in countless places: in the city and countryside, small scale and large, in personal conversations, on the phone, by e-mail or chat. Church ministers, social ministry deacons and numerous volunteers as well as partners from other organizations carry out this valuable church work in spaces that are simultaneously public yet also private and highly protected – whatever is discussed in pastoral care is held under a strict seal of confidentiality. Therefore, a large part of this work necessarily remains hidden, and many people do not even realize that “pastoral care is church.”

David Groschwitz, Thomas Lohnes/epd, Kay Michalak/epd



## OPENNESS AND RESPECT



An open and respectful encounter with people in hospital, bringing plenty of time and an atmosphere of calmness – that’s the linchpin of my work. Time and again I hear people say, “I’ve kept you so long already, and you must have so much else to do.” But I respond, with just a little exaggeration, that I have all the time in the world. Actually, I try not to let myself be driven by appointments or other scheduled visits. Wherever I am, I want to have time. Daily life in the hospital is already hectic enough. Here, time itself is valuable – as a seriously ill patient once showed me. During my visits, this patient could usually only summon up enough strength for a few sentences. Then she would fall asleep again, and I would say a very quiet goodbye. Then on one hot summer day, I simply stayed a bit longer, really just to escape the heat for a while. But after about ten minutes, the woman began to talk with unexpected clarity – and she just kept on talking.

The daily contact with illness, death, and dying has helped me to distinguish between what is really important and what is less important. The person before me, life, love, these are important – and are followed by a long nothingness.

“Wherever I am, I want to have time. Daily life in the hospital is already hectic enough. Here, time itself is valuable.”

Karin Lackus, retired hospital chaplain, Mannheim

David Groschwitz



**Our world is more mobile than ever before.** For many newcomers to Baden – be they professionals or families, refugees or foreign students – the church is one of the first places where they can find support and community. In our churches, we celebrate together and learn from one another.

It is you who light my lamp;  
the Lord, my God, lights up my darkness.

Psalms 18:28

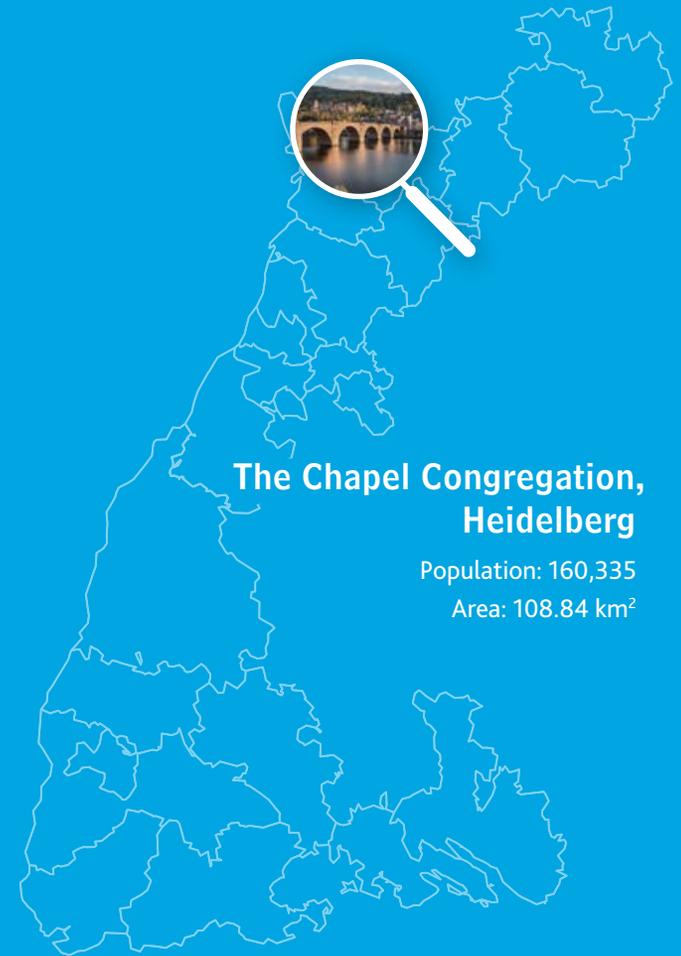
When we worship, we consciously pause for a moment, interrupt our regular routines, and focus together on God and those around us. In the sermon and in the Lord's Supper, biblical readings and Christian ritual combine to create an emotional experience where we can encounter God and discover a sense of security. And where words fail us, songs, prayers and symbolic actions become our common language and build bridges.

Worship and prayer services are open to all, whether Sunday services, family or children's services, multilingual, special or new-style services, World Day of Prayer, or peace services. The message is the same: "You are welcome, whoever you

may be." God's large family gathers together on a variety of occasions, and a spirit of connectedness extends beyond just those people gathered. Even the smallest gathering still represents the global fellowship of the Church of Jesus Christ.

National boundaries disappear in the church community. We all belong to the one body of Christ and approach one another with open hearts, whether that is during ecumenical or other pilgrimages, in new forms of living and learning together, or in special programs for immigrants and new arrivals.

David Groschwitz



### The Chapel Congregation, Heidelberg

Population: 160,335  
Area: 108.84 km<sup>2</sup>



We know that the Spirit has enabled us to overcome cultural and other barriers with the message of Jesus – a message of concern for people, a message of justice, liberation and redemption. But to do this effectively we must be willing to go beyond the assumptions of our own nation or culture and side with what God declares in his Word. Jesus desires to bring his followers into unity with one another despite all our ethnic, nationalistic or other prejudices. May we continue the mission of spreading the good news about God's kingdom and caring for the needs of people.

In our music, we usually use singing and instruments to worship God, to praise and thank him, and to ask him for certain things. If prayer means speaking to God, then that is exactly what we do in our Christian songs.

I have been blessed through my work in the church. Human dignity is what I value most, and I wish it for everyone. Because our group is so diverse, I learn something new every day. I feel loved and accepted by our members and most importantly respected as a member of the church. Our chapel is the one place where I don't have to worry about where I come from. This also helps me to accept and appreciate others.

"If prayer means speaking to God, then that is exactly what we do in our Christian songs."

Louis Desmond Efu Nkong, Manita African Choir,  
Heidelberg

David Groschwitz

 ekiba.de/Imagefilm

# There are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:4



The roman church of St. Cyriak in Sulzburg

Luther once said, "Nothing on earth is more able to make the sad cheerful, the happy sad, or the despondent hearty than music." Today, the church continues to move people, especially through its sounds: the organ playing a processional for a bride and groom, a solemn chorale bidding farewell to a loved one, a Christian musical for children, a moving spiritual in a gospel service, or a Taizé song during an international meeting. The call of church bells to prayer, organ building and organ music being recognized by UNESCO as a significant World Cultural Heritage, or even the crowdsourced digital church bell map #createsoundscape all prove that church music is a diverse and vibrant part of our culture.

The heritage of architecture and art history is also immensely important. Wherever mighty city churches or idyllic village chapels may be, these places of worship stand as freely accessible witnesses to the many treasures of past epochs – from medieval murals to Baroque sculptures and modern stained-glass windows. They invite locals and visitors alike to quiet contemplation, and create an atmospheric setting for exhibitions and events.

Cultivating, sharing and thinking about music, art and culture – the Protestant Academy and adult education programs promote open social dialogue and enrich intercultural debate.



## Villingen-Schwenningen

Population: 85,181

Area: 165.48 km<sup>2</sup>

# BRINGING THE WORLD INTO HARMONY



“Music and church accompany me through life. They give me strength and comfort.”

Christine Heinzelmann, Physiotherapist, Villingen

Music and faith have been connected for me ever since my childhood. At bedtime each night my mother would sing to me “The moon has risen” (Der Mond ist aufgegangen), and I would feel safe. Later I would sing this hymn in multi-part harmony in the choir. Today I rehearse with our choir in Villingen, and familiar songs give me support and strength. For new projects, rehearsals bring with them the anticipation of an atmospheric concert evening accompanied by a large orchestra. It’s nice to have the freedom to drop out of some projects when other things come up. But I soon miss singing and start looking forward to being back at it again.

Getting together with very different people at our rehearsals is also great. It’s nice when patients approach me and say, “I heard you at the choir concert last Sunday, and I was touched by the way you sang there.” Church music is not just for singing along, it’s also for listening and for pausing.

Rev. Anne Heitmann at the World Council of Churches in Geneva, June 2022.



## Bound in Friendship with Christians Around the World

Ecumenism opens up a wide horizon. After all, the word means "the entire inhabited world." But ecumenism also includes the words "house" and "stay." This means we are one church with a wide horizon. It offers people a home, no matter where they come from: a home for their faith and hope, a place where they experience hospitality and open doors. That remains important.

At its founding 200 years ago, it was declared that the Protestant Church in Baden was "in internal agreement and bound in friendship with Christians around the world." It was about growing together in diversity while also looking to worldwide ecumenism. This great heritage obliges us to move into the future – well-grounded, with a broad horizon, and together in the fellowship of churches worldwide.

Rev. Anne Heitmann  
Ecumenical Officer of the Protestant Church in Baden



Marcelo Schneider

**33 000**  
Employees

**6 478**  
Skilled Educators in kindergartens, nurseries, crèches, parent-child clubs, and day-care centers

**24**  
Church Districts

9 Schools

approx.  
**600** parishes

**3** Protestant Technical Colleges for Social Education

**650** Choir leaders

**960**  
Ministers

**52 000** Volunteers

**13 500**  
Singers

**390**  
Social Ministry Deacons

**400** Choirs

**110** Inpatient Care Facilities

**530** Ministers and **150** Social Ministry Deacons teach in public and private schools

**637**  
Kindergartens and Preschools

**64** Assisted Living Facilities for Seniors

**250 Brass Ensembles with 5 500 Musicians**

Members  
**1.06 Million**

**75** Social Welfare and Social Service Stations, where **2,450** colleagues care for over **12,000** clients

**400** Religious Education Schoolteachers

**696** Churches

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