

Bonner Querschnitte

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Archbishop Schirmmacher visits the Protestant parish mission “The Blessing Church” for the New Year’s reception

Press release by the Blessing Gospel Mission Church (Mönchengladbach)

(Bonn, 14.04.2025) Archbishop Thomas Paul Schirmmacher visited the International Ecumenical New Year’s Festival of the “Blessing Gospel Mission Church e. V.”, also known as “The Blessing Church”, which belongs to his diocese, in Mönchengladbach on January 11, 2025. Schirmmacher is Metropolitan of the Archdiocese of Continental Europe of the India Mission Church, a conservative Anglican church in India, and thus belongs to the GAFCON Anglican Bishops Council of India.

Superintendent Pastor Dietrich Denker (patron of the Blessing Church) and Bishop Michael Chandrathas (co-founder of the Blessing Church) welcomed the festive congregation on behalf of their working group “Gemeinsam Interkulturell Voran” in the imposing, historic premises of the Protestant Friedenskirche in the Eicken district, which was built in 1885. Deaconess Esther Salmigkeit-Winkens, parish priest Antje Brand and pastor Till Hüttenberger took part in the event as representatives of the Friedenskirche.

In his speech entitled “World peace begins in small circles”, Archbishop Schirmmacher addressed the importance of differences, dealing with prejudice and the path to reconciliation. With his urgent appeal that Christian repentance always includes turning away from evil and condemning thoughts about members of other groups, he called for peace



Archbishop Thomas Schirmmacher, Metropolitan of the Archdiocese of India Christian Mission for Continental Europe, speaks on the topic “World peace begins in small circles” © BQ/Martin Warnecke

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to be lived in everyday life. According to Schirmmacher, Jesus rightly condemned the derogatory statement “I thank you that I am not like the others” as incompatible with his message.

Afterwards, Archbishop Schirmmacher, together with his suffragan Metropolitan Michael Chandrathas and Superintendent Pastor Dietrich Denker, blessed the newly married Indian couple Yedla, who are starting a new chapter in their lives together in Germany.

The New Year’s reception, conceived by Bishop Michael Chandrathas in close cooperation with Mr. Wolfgang Riehn, Managing Director of the AGORA socio-cultural institution and advisor to the Blessing Church, reflected the religious, cultural and social diversity of the city of Mönchengladbach in an outstanding way. “We want to work tirelessly for the good of the city,” emphasized Bishop Chandrathas to the Lord Mayor Felix Heinrichs, who was present.



(from left) Police officer Wolfgang Röthgens, Archbishop Thomas Schirmmacher, Superintendent Dietrich Denker and Lord Mayor Felix Heinrichs © BQ/Martin Warenecke

Numerous members of international congregations and representatives of various churches and denominations accepted the invitation from Blessing Church—including Archpriest Aleksejs Ribakov (Russian Orthodox Church), Priest Alexander Teschmit (New Apostolic Church West Germany), Abdoulaye Sadio Barry (software developer and presidential candidate of the West African state of Guinea) and the Romanian entrepreneur Lucian Mustata, CEO of Heartbeats International.

Members of the German Bundestag Gülistan Yüksel and Dr. Günter Krings, Lord Mayor Felix Heinrichs, Mayor Hajo Siemes and Honorary Lord Mayor Monika Bartsch (representing the Mönchengladbacher Tafel) also paid tribute to the beneficial work of the international communities. Member of the German Bundestag Dr. Günter Krings (CDU) had written a greeting in which he emphasized the inestimable value of international community work. As he was unable to attend in person, his greeting was read out by the Chairman of the Evangelical Working Group of the CDU Mönchengladbach, Dr. Herbert Loock. Archbishop Schirmmacher also ceremoniously presented the certificate of appointment to Professor Dr. Günter Krings as patron of the Blessing Church.

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The well-attended, evening-long event was an expression of the colorful diversity of Christian life in Mönchengladbach. In addition to the program items mentioned above, the clergyman Wolfgang Röthgens was honored for his 45 years of service with the Mönchengladbach police. An international choir delighted the audience with atmospheric gospel songs, the world-famous clown Antoschka – Queen of Clowns provided amusement with acrobatic performances, a Ukrainian string quartet interpreted works by Vivaldi, and a collection of 600 euros was donated to the Mönchengladbach food bank.



(from left) Bishop Chandrathas, Superintendent Denker, Archbishop Schirmmacher and Reverend Dr. Ji-Ung Jeremy Lim © BQ/Martin Warnecke

The crowning finale of the New Year celebrations was the prayer for peace, spoken by Archpriest Aleksejs Ribakov and members of the committee of the “Together Interculturally Forward” working group:

- Bishop Dr. Martin Ndongala, originally Congo (MIRS congregation Bochum),
- Pastor Yoram Karusya, originally from Tanzania (United Evangelical Mission),
- Reverend Dr. Ji-Ung Jeremy Lim, originally from Korea (World Evangelical Alliance),
- Pastor Chon Pak, originally from Korea (FOKUS Church).

The participation of committee member Evangelist Timo Bauke Jansen (Christmas in a Shoebox), originally from the Netherlands, who traveled all the way from Lübeck with his family, remains particularly impressive.

Downloads and links:

- **Photo 1:** Archbishop Thomas Schirmmacher, Metropolitan of the Archdiocese of India Christian Mission for Continental Europe, speaks on the topic “World peace begins in small circles” © BQ/Martin Warnecke
- **Photo 2** (from left): Police officer Wolfgang Röthgens, Archbishop Thomas Schirmmacher, Superintendent Dietrich Denker and Lord Mayor Felix Heinrichs © BQ/Martin Warnecke

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- **Photo 3** (from left): Bishop Chandrathas, Superintendent Denker, Archbishop Schirmmacher and Reverend Dr. Ji-Ung Jeremy Lim © BQ/Martin Warnecke
- Picture gallery of the event: <https://thomasschirmmacher.net/?p=23433>
- Website of the GAFCON Anglican Bishops Council of India: <https://gafconabci.org>
- Website of the Blessing Gospel Mission Church: <https://www.blessingchurch.de>

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