2019 seems like it was a long time ago now that we are dealing with the terrible crisis of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, it is a year which stands out in our memories for several reasons, as it was a time of revival for Emmaus International as an organisation. We reaffirmed the values and objectives that our founders established, with the 50th anniversary of the Universal Manifesto and the publication of the extended edition of Abbé Pierre’s thoughts and speeches.

This heritage work was even more relevant as it took place on the eve of a global crisis, which has clearly demonstrated that these values and his strong stance are still very current and should act as our compass during this storm.

The Emmaus movement remains and will always be not only by the side of those who suffer most, but with them. We are united in good times and bad, through solidarity but also because Abbé Pierre reminded us on numerous occasions that “The only source of political intelligence is involvement in the distress of those who are suffering most in the community that you must govern.”

This specific experience which enables us to say with certainty that assets and essential services, such as health, should be managed collectively and with the sole purpose of safeguarding public welfare. Agriculture should first and foremost be local and independent in its production methods and large international companies should not be free to act without being monitored or regulated. On these issues, along with many others, let us act, communicate, and denounce. Together we can make a difference!

Patrick ATOHOUN, Chair of Emmaus International

*Abbé Pierre, quoted in Drawing Strength from the Infinitely Small, Paris, Cherche-midi, 2019

Emmaus International is democratically and internationally governed, with elected members from grassroots’ level from all four continents. Every four years, the member organisations meet for their World Assembly. At this key moment in the life of the movement, the Emmaus groups make decisions on the collective guidelines and elect the Chair. In each region (Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe) regional assemblies elect 24 board members who, together with the Chair, make up the Emmaus International Board. The elected members in the regions steer the implementation of these guidelines with the support of teams of permanent staff.
Our Universal Manifesto is always alive as we are its incarnation. And it is up to us to work together to bring it to life and to carry the hope of a solidarity society!

Patrick Atohoun, Chair of Emmaus International

Return to the Federal Parliament in Bern 50 years on

Thanks to all the efforts of the Emmaus Switzerland Federation, the host of this commemorative event, the Emmaus movement gathered in the National Council Chamber at the Swiss Federal Parliament for round table discussions interspersed by musical intervals. At the venue, 180 companions, friends, managers, and staff members from around the world came to revive the unconditional values of welcoming others, exchanging, and sharing in equal dignity, as enshrined in our Universal Manifesto. Together they reclaimed the words in this funding text, which calls on us not solely to fight against the causes of poverty through solidarity actions, but also to denounce injustices and to hold those responsible accountable!

Communicating Abbé Pierre’s values to the general public

During this busy morning of round table discussions, the Waisenhausplatz, adjacent to the Federal Parliament, was turned into an Emmaus village open to the public. Swiss communities and groups offered a solidarity meal and the locals in Bern had the chance to discover the three struggles led by the international movement throughout the world. This festive afternoon was very successful thanks to all the Swiss communities and their enthusiasm for this event. It was a unique opportunity to strengthen ties and to enable companions, from Switzerland and elsewhere, to meet. Thanks to everyone’s involvement in this event, the legacy of historic figures in the movement was passed on, and above all, the identity of the Emmaus International movement was revived.

Street interviews

Participants talk about what touched them the most during this commemoration day and what they will take back to their groups.

“It was a pleasure to see people from different countries and nationalities talking about the same things and seeing that we all understand each other. I will take the energy back with me to continue our work knowing that we are on the right track.”
Sabina Aurnah Jahic, FIS (Bosnia Herzegovina)

“I will take back the energy from today to my organisation, to work with the most vulnerable people who we act with, to give them a reason to work and fight against poverty and injustice in our society.”
Mynul Haque Santo, Thanapara Swallows (Bangladesh)

“This is a movement which, through the Universal Manifesto, provides us with guidelines, a road map, to be able to fight against the causes of poverty and reach the most excluded people.”
Yaovi Attiogbe, M.A.R.S. (Togo)

“What struck me the most in the companions’ accounts is that the Universal Manifesto is still relevant [...] What I’ll take back to my group and for the Americas groups that I represent is this impression that the Manifesto is even more profound, it is full of answers, as I witnessed this morning.”
Percy Vargas, Emmaus San Augustin (Peru)
With its many years of experience in running international work camps, in September 2019 the Americas region welcomed 80 people to the Emmaus Pereira community in Colombia. Together, they shared their experiences and their views on Emmaus’ struggles. These types of international meetings enable us to strengthen commitment and the sense of belonging to our movement, and to train younger generations who will take up the challenge of continuing our struggles.

The Americas work camp was an occasion for participants to take part in training workshops on the theme of “social transformation”. Distributed into sub-groups, they were able to discuss their practices on topics such as education, culture, gender equality and even creativity and innovation. The presentation of struggles led by the region, organised with allies of the movement, also led to the link being made between solidarity actions and political campaigning work. Finally, time spent working in the community enabled the participants to lend a helping hand to the companions of Emmaus Pereira (collecting and sorting recyclable materials, awareness campaign with neighbouring communities, planting banana trees and caring for animals, sorting clothes and organising a jumble sale, etc.).

During its last World Assembly in Jesolo, Italy, in 2016, the Emmaus movement reaffirmed its will to continue organising international work camps. These camps gather members of Emmaus International from all the movement’s regions, offering a chance to exchange ideas, reaffirm commitments, meet other members, hold discussions with local actors and rally around a common struggle. Having already taken place in Asia and Africa, it was now the turn of the Americas region, who organised an international work and training camp in September 2019.
INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY AND CAMPAIGNING

Solidarity is integral to our Emmaus movement. The Emmaus associations pool their resources to help the most excluded, through solidarity programmes organised around the 3 struggles.

Our international solidarity actions are part of the broader perspective of genuine social transformation and feed into our actions to challenge decision-makers.

ETHICAL AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY

This involves creating and defending economic models which provide a place for all, allowing everyone to live off their work and to take back their fundamental rights.

EMMAUS ACTIONS

Guaranteeing loans to associations or cooperatives; financing social actions through collecting and recycling work in the communities; reintegration through employment; production of handicrafts and fair trade; sorting and upcycling goods.

SPOTLIGHT ON...

International trade agreements multiply the number of obscure and accessible only to the most powerful. Emmaus is part of the “Stop impunity” campaign calling for the adoption of international legal provisions to ensure stricter control of multinationals.

SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Setting up initiatives that bring about a fair balance across the board: social, environmental, democratic, with regard to gender, accessing fundamental rights, etc., to be able to propose solutions for a sustainable world.

EMMAUS ACTIONS

Mutual health organisations for disadvantaged persons; school education for children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds; Nokoué citizen management and participative programme for access to water and sanitation.

SPOTLIGHT ON...

For over 10 years, Emmaus International has supported the population of Lake Nokoué in Benin (90,000 people) so they can obtain access to water and sanitation facilities. This programme led to the “Lake House” being built in 2019 to accommodate the activities of the users’ association and local actions to defend the right to water, and to commission a solar energy power station.

IN 2019

ANNUAL SOLIDARITY PROGRAMME

The contributions of Emmaus groups and the funds raised for the Annual Solidarity Programme financed 14 projects run by Emmaus organisations in Eastern Europe, Africa, the Americas and Asia, along with 3 collective projects, amounting to a total of €468,300.

ETHICAL AND SOLIDARITY FUNDS

The Emmaus Ethical Fund (EEF) is a tool which pools resources from the Emmaus groups, created on the initiative of Emmaus International, together with Banca Etica. Funded by Emmaus groups who choose to deposit funds, it has already been used to guarantee loans to Emmaus groups. In 2019, a decision was made to extend its scope, by allowing direct loans to be taken out to develop solidarity economic activities and self-sufficiency, a cash bridge for groups awaiting the payment of subsidies, or to contribute to the financing of micro-credit actions by providing medium-term financial support.

At the end of 2019, the EEF increased to approximately €871,000. This sum allows us to guarantee 4 loans which are still in place.

PEACE, FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT AND SETTLEMENT FOR UNIVERSAL CITIZENSHIP

Giving everyone the right to live in a peaceful world without borders.

EMMAUS ACTIONS

Protection and reintegration of child soldiers in the Democratic Republic of Congo; fighting against human trafficking; helping migrants and asylum seekers to receive a dignified welcome; advocacy for the freedom of movement and settlement of persons for universal citizenship.

SPOTLIGHT ON...

Recognising the lack of an international alliance between local authorities and civil society on migration issues, in 2019 the OIC (co-founded by Emmaus International) together with Avola and the “Snapshots from the Borders” network organised a meeting of local authorities and civil society representatives from around the world in Paris for the purpose of creating this alliance.
To mark the 70th anniversary of the Emmaus movement, and following the initial release of “Pensées inédites pour un monde plus juste” in 2015, the publishing house Cherche midi renewed their partnership with Emmaus International and published Drawing Strength from the Infinitely Small, an extended edition of the 2015 book, with many texts from Abbé Pierre's personal archives, his numerous conferences and articles, and thousands of hours of sounds recordings, transcribed for the first time. For the first time, and to bring our heritage to life throughout the world, Emmaus International published this book in the movement’s three languages (French, English, and Spanish).

**A joint project**

Jean Rousseau, who compiled the first edition, once again took up the challenge of exploring the unpublished archives held at ANMT. He was supported in this task by Brigitte Mary, along with longstanding figures in the movement who listened to hours of recordings of conferences and other speeches by Abbé Pierre.

Officially released in France on 7th November 2019, the book was made available to French Emmaus groups initially to mark the 48 hours of Emmaus’ event organised to commemorate the setting up of the first Emmaus community in Neuilly-Plaisance. To accompany this release, a promotion kit was created and Jean Rousseau was invited to numerous public readings and signing sessions.

The release of Drawing Strength from the Infinitely Small in bookshops was an opportunity for Emmaus International to set up an Instagram account. Every week, since the end of 2019, Abbé Pierre quotes of his numerous conferences and articles, and thousands of hours of sounds recordings, transcribed for the first time. For the first time, and to bring our heritage to life throughout the world, Emmaus International published this book in the movement’s three languages (French, English, and Spanish).

**Order your copy!**

Emmaus groups and communities can contact Emmanuelle Larcher, Heritage Manager at Emmaus International, if they wish to order copies. All the funds raised from book sales will be allocated to the Heritage Fund at Emmaus International, as the sole legatee of Abbé Pierre, to share his thoughts, protect and enhance the value of his archives and to bring his struggles to life.

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING WE HAVE DONE WAS HAVING THAT INSOLENCE TO ACT AGAINST THE DONE THING…**

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**FINANCIAL SUMMARY**

**2019**

For the operations and life of the movement, the 2019 financial year closed with a positive result of €115,523, which was allocated to the association’s reserves to ensure we are able to face a potential financial loss in 2020 related to the Covid-19 pandemic. Concerning our solidarity and political commitments, we have spent more than we have received throughout the year, and the difference was taken from our dedicated funds.

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“You must make yourselves aware — failing which you shall perish, in spite of all your material powers — that the demand that stands before you from now on is a demand for solidarity, and for a solidarity that comes first from the heart, and from human presence. In the same way that we fight against tyranny, we are capable of creating union, and fraternity. It is our responsibility to set the example!”

Abbé Pierre

(Closing remarks at the 9th general assembly of Emmaus International to mark 50 years of Emmaus, 25 September 1999, Chamerolles, in Emmaus International Information Letter 113, October-November 1999)