



**tam  
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# The Emmaus movement is about people coming together and deciding to combine their efforts...

## WORLD ASSEMBLIES

tam-tam: the Emmaus news wall

“The Emmaus movement is about people coming together and, on seeing other people suffering, deciding to combine their efforts. That, I think, is what’s at the heart of the movement.”

Abbé Pierre



**Editorial**  
By Brigitte Mary, Emmaus International’s first permanent staff member  
The main remit of any world assembly is to choose a movement’s policy directions, and this will definitely be the case in 2016! Indeed, while Abbé Pierre said that our universal manifesto, adopted by the first world assembly in May 1969 in Berne, was “the smallest common denominator” for “a good middleclass Swiss citizen” and a “Latin American revolutionary” faced with extreme and mass poverty, our successive world assemblies have taken the

concept further. As part of an ongoing process, our world assemblies have clarified the manifesto by adopting three other «founding texts»: Scope and Limits of Emmaus’ social commitment (1979), Principles and Membership Charter (1996) and Solidarity commitments (1996). The 2003 world assembly enshrined these developments in the statutes and adopted our first work plan. The 2007 and 2012 world assemblies confir-

med and expanded these priority areas so that they encompassed the entire movement. **Shared values and future action is therefore the theme of the 2016 WA.** The discussion process started in 2014 will result in the adoption of a set of principles for each of us covering both grassroots and campaigning work. The world assembly may well produce our fifth founding text!



All aboard

→ Prepare for the world assembly  
All the information about the world assembly will gradually be made available on Emmaus International’s intranet  
> <http://www.emmaus-international.org/connexion>, world assembly tab  
  
→ Work on the values  
Phase two of the work on the values is underway and will end in late September 2015. Even if you have not taken part in phase one, phase two is fully open and accessible to you!  
The documents are available on our intranet  
<http://www.emmaus-international.org/fr/connexion>, sub-tab Work on the values

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### Emmaus on the move

With the 2016 world assembly just a few months away, we take a look back at four world assemblies that have made a big impact on Emmaus International’s history.

#### 1969 - BERNE (SWITZERLAND)



**1<sup>st</sup> WA - Adoption of the universal manifesto**  
“An international structure needed to be created so that we could meet and bolster our initiatives and solidarity work”, explains Stéphane Drechsler, the founder of Emmaus Cologne (Germany), who took part in the first assembly. Following his near-death experience in 1963, Abbé Pierre realised that he was the only person who knew all the Emmaus groups world-wide. He therefore convened the first Emmaus world assembly, bringing together 70 Emmaus groups from 20 countries and four continents. The groups adopted the universal manifesto, which needed to be “clear enough to guide our daily work and open enough to adapt to the range of countries and continents involved”, he remembers. The assembly also decided to set up an international secretariat. The next meeting was scheduled for 1971, when Emmaus International was officially set up as an association.

#### 1996 - UNESCO, PARIS (FRANCE)



**In solidarity for justice**  
“This world assembly raised the issue of who we were and what we did in order to contribute to social change”, remembers Juan Melquiades, the leader of Emmaus Piura (Peru). Two more founding texts were adopted at the assembly. The Emmaus Principles and Membership Charter reaffirmed Emmaus’ uniqueness and laid down member organisations’ rights and duties, and the criteria for groups wishing to join the movement, based on transparency, self-sufficiency and solidarity. The movement’s values were clarified via the Solidarity commitments document. The annual solidarity sale also became compulsory for all the groups. “We now need to re-read and take ownership once again of these commitments to continue to build the fairer and more humane world that we need,” concludes Juan.

#### 2003 - OUAGADOUGOU (BURKINA FASO)



**Speaking out and acting together**  
“We held the world assembly in Africa for the very first time”, explains Véronique Ghanih, the leader of Emmaus Tohoué (Benin). The decentralisation process was launched in 2003 and led to the current four Emmaus regions being created. The closing statement underlined that throughout the world, people are suffering as a result of not having access to their fundamental rights. “We organized a march to protest against the policies of exploitation and impoverishment imposed by the countries in the developed world. Abbé Pierre insisted on completing the entire route in his wheelchair despite being tired”, she remembers. The assembly adopted three priority areas – access to water, ethical finance and migrants’ rights – with collective activism on these issues beginning. “The areas that we are still working on today stem from this assembly”, reiterates Véronique.

#### 2007 - SARAJEVO (BOSNIA)



**Let’s move forward together**  
The theme of the first world assembly following the founder’s death encouraged all the world’s groups to meet and continue to take action together. Emmaus International became Abbé Pierre’s sole legatee with the remit of publicizing, protecting and bringing alive his memory. The Sarajevo world assembly selected two further priority areas: education and healthcare, and also adopted a declaration on freedom of movement. “Holding this world assembly in a country that had suffered from so much ethnic and religious discrimination was important”, explained Moon Sharma, the leader of Emmaus Tara Projects (India) and a member of the executive committee. “We called on all citizens, civil society organisations and associations worldwide to champion the Emmaus movement’s fundamental principle: unconditional shelter and support.”

### Next port of call... Montreuil (France)

Jean Rousseau has been president since 2007 and will complete his term of office at the next world assembly to be held in Jesolo (Italy) on 18-23 April 2016. In this interview, he goes back over the aims of this upcoming meeting.

**What have been the main achievements since 2012?** The past three years have been marked by concrete progress, notably on training, and on priority areas (water, migrants, healthcare) in which satisfactory results have been achieved thanks to everyone’s active involvement. The Anglet world assembly also called for everyone to get involved and take on a more active role in Emmaus: we have made progress in this area, particularly at the regional level. The movement’s hard core has been strengthened!

**What are the aims of the 2016 world assembly?** The 2016 world assembly should enable us to take a step back and reflect upon what guides and motivates our work, but also what we need to do to work more effectively together, hence the central theme of the assembly based on action principles and values. We must also work together successfully, as this is vital in a globalized context. Emmaus International cannot solely be a sum of groups, but instead should be the result of our collective solidarity initiatives, as Abbé Pierre asked us to be.



**How should groups prepare for the assembly?** I think that the groups need to seriously take the time to discuss the proposed topics (work on the values, activism and solidarity) and inform themselves sufficiently far in advance about the debates to be held at the assembly.

**How do you see Emmaus International in 15 years’ time?** I hope it will be a movement that has managed to harness more resources and energy in order to continue to be inventive and more supportive. A movement that will have had campaigning successes thanks to the experience of its pilot projects, such as the Lake Nokoué project. A movement with a true collective dynamic in order to bring alive alternatives at international level.