



# Emmaus is a manifesto.

50 YEARS OF THE UNIVERSAL MANIFESTO

# A BASE

WE CAN BUILD ON TOGETHER

tam-tam: the Emmaus news wall

“Emmaus is a manifesto.  
A manifestation of actions.  
Action on the ground.  
Fire, disaster, selfless acts.  
Build, repair, fund, welcome.  
Unequivocal demands without  
barter. Emmaus stalks the  
cold pavement. Poverty  
becomes its prey.”

Patrick Guillain, ‘Emmaus and the World’, 2019



## Editorial

Patrick Atohoun, Chair of Emmaus International

On 24 May 1969, Abbé Pierre convened the world's Emmaus groups to the Federal Parliament of Switzerland in Bern, for the first World Assembly. Ambitious and visionary, they adopted the Universal Manifesto which would become, and remains to this day, the bedrock of our international Movement. We went back to Bern on the same day this founding document was adopted 50

years ago as we believe that, after all the time that has gone by and the various challenges our Movement has faced along the way, we have a shared duty to enable those most excluded from society – those who suffer most – to take back control of their lives, despite their difficult circumstances and environments. On that day, we familiarised ourselves again with our Universal Manifesto. Although it calls for

the causes of poverty to be fought, our task now is not only to take action, but also to denounce such situations of injustice and to name those responsible for them. Our Universal Manifesto is still relevant today because we put it into practice. It is up to us to work together to keep it alive and to kindle hope for a society founded on solidarity!



All aboard

- Brigitte Besson, Swiss photographer, captured the event commemorating the Universal Manifesto. Look back on the day's events by visiting our Emmaus International photo gallery: [www.flickr.com/photos/emmaus\\_international/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/emmaus_international/)
- Having assimilated our struggles and played with words, Swiss slam poet, Patrick Guillain, gave a fantastic performance, so that the power of the Manifesto resonated throughout the Federal Parliament chamber in Bern. A man of talent! You can find his slam on the page of the event (on our website): [manifesto.emmaus-international.org](http://manifesto.emmaus-international.org)
- Immerse yourself once again in the Universal Manifesto, available in 21 languages on the page of the event (on our website): [manifesto.emmaus-international.org](http://manifesto.emmaus-international.org)

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# A manifestation of actions. Action on the ground. Fire, disaster, selfless acts.



Emmaus on the move

On Friday 24 May 2019, 200 representatives of Emmaus International, hailing from Switzerland, Africa, the Americas and Asia explored the past, present and future significance of the “Universal Manifesto”. This was the second time the Movement had met in the National Council chamber of the Federal Parliament of Switzerland. Here's an overview of the session's round table discussions.



José Aravena, Godefroid Bodeüs and Georges Chevieux, attendees of the 1969 General Assembly. Round table discussion: ‘The motivations for writing the Universal Manifesto and for setting up Emmaus International’.

### A SHARED STARTING POINT AND SOURCE OF HOPE

In 1963, whilst touring the Emmaus communities of Latin America, Abbé Pierre's boat sank. This near-death experience was a turning point for the Movement. “He shared his concerns with us about what could have happened if he had drowned [...] given he was the only one who had all the contact details and who knew the different Emmaus groups around the world”, said José Aravena. Setting up an international network of those groups therefore became a necessity. In order to do so and because “he had lost his famous black notebook with all the contact details of the Emmaus members”, remembers Georges Chevieux, “during our free time, we had to help him produce a directory of all the groups [...] A colossal task!” Thanks to all that work, Godefroid Bodeüs had the privilege of travelling to Bern in order to “assess and adopt the Universal Manifesto”.



Emmanuel Siambo, Chair of Emmaus Solidarité Ouaga (Burkina Faso). Round table discussion: ‘The Universal Manifesto as a source of inspiration and commitment’.

### A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION

Although he joined the Emmaus Movement in 1990, it was only a while later that Emmanuel Siambo discovered the Universal Manifesto and its law to “serve first those who suffer most”. “This sentence [...] was one of the main reasons I got involved, in order to help try to eradicate that mindset of always thinking about yourself before anyone else. Tackling the causes of poverty... At the time, I knew that it would be a long-drawn-out task. It is inspiring, though!” he says. Today, the Universal Manifesto is still just as important to him. “It's instilled in my mind and in my values, and I try to put it into practice every day. It puts all people, without any exceptions, at the centre of our lives and our struggles. It advocates respect for and the dignity of each person, and working together for solidarity”.



Moon Sharma, Director of Tara Projects (India) and Vice Chair of Emmaus International. Round table discussion: ‘Today's meaning of the Universal Manifesto’.

### STILL AS RELEVANT AS EVER

When the Universal Manifesto was adopted, it created a framework in order to fight against the causes of poverty. For Moon Sharma, the text is still valid and just as relevant, given the world's challenges today: “Today after 50 years, the Manifesto is as relevant and important as it was at that time. Today, the world is confronted with massive problems of poverty, the suppression of human rights, injustice, intolerance and discrimination. It has resulted in unprecedented violence.” In order to tackle this situation and come up with new alternatives, the Emmaus Movement must remain united: “With the current realities and the common challenges faced by all, each of us, who are a part of Emmaus movement, wherever they are, we all must work in solidarity. Only then we will be able to change the world.”



Paul Daroueche, companion at the Satu Mare group (Romania). Round table discussion: ‘The relevance of the Universal Manifesto for the next 50 years’.

### A WEAPON FOR THE YOUNG

For Paul Daroueche, the positive war to which Abbé Pierre used to refer – a war on poverty – is far from being over: “The problems he saw in his time are still happening – inequalities are still just as acute [...] and more and more men, women and children are living in poverty”. For this reason, if the Emmaus Movement aims to bring about change, he says it must reach out to the young: “Young people are precious, and the Emmaus network needs to involve them in order to progress and to ensure that Abbé Pierre's values, experience and teachings are kept alive. In 1962, Abbé Pierre said that ‘A civilisation can be judged by the quality of the means by which it enables its young to express their anger.’ We must pass on this anger, which fires us up to wage a positive war.”



Next port of call... Bern, Switzerland

Given that the Emmaus Federation of Switzerland hosted the event commemorating the Universal Manifesto, the companions of its nine communities all helped, on 24 May 2019 in Bern, to welcome representatives of the Emmaus Movement from around the world.

It all started with a wild suggestion made by François Mollard, Chair of the Emmaus Federation of Switzerland, to return to the Federal Parliament of Switzerland, 50 years on, in order to mark the 50th anniversary of the Universal Manifesto. What seemed to be a pipe dream a few months beforehand actually took place on Friday 24 May 2019, with the help of the President of the National Council of the Federal Chambers. “Personally I felt we absolutely had to mark this exceptional event, in a way that did justice to the message delivered at the time, in order to breathe new life into it, especially since international solidarity is needed now more than ever.” Said François Mollard a few weeks before the event.

After the morning's round table discussions, the Waisenhausplatz, next to the Federal Parliament, played host to an Emmaus village that was open to the people of Bern. Swiss communities and groups, spread throughout the country, distributed solidarity meals and were able to tell passers-by about the three struggles the international Movement is leading worldwide. The afternoon was a great success thanks to the help of the Swiss communities and



their obvious enthusiasm for the event. For Jérémie Udry, a Companion at Emmaus Valais and member of the working group that organised the event, the day was perceived to be “a unique opportunity to strengthen our ties and enable the Swiss companions to meet”.

Thanks to everyone's efforts in Bern, and elsewhere in the world, the event made it possible, not only to pass on the legacy of the Movement's long-standing activists, but most of all, to reawaken the very essence of the international Emmaus Movement.