



EVANGELISCHE  
KIRCHE  
IM RHEINLAND



THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH  
IN THE RHINELAND

# WHO WE ARE

The Evangelical Church in the Rhineland (Evangelische Kirche im Rheinland / EKIR) has around 2.66 million members, making it the second largest of the 20 regional member churches of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD). The EKIR region includes areas in the federal states of North Rhine-Westphalia, Rhineland-Palatinate, Hesse and Saarland.



# WHAT WE BELIEVE



Where is security to be found in this world? As Protestant Christians we are certain that God loves and accepts us, no matter who we are or what we have to offer. Jesus Christ bore witness to God's mercy through his life and death. For us the Bible as Holy Scripture serves as the source of our faith and our guidance for life. The Bible tells of God and the relationship between God and humankind. It is the word of God, even though it was recorded and passed on by human beings. We encounter God's word in Jesus Christ. It is through him that God's love is made available to us. His death and his resurrection are the basis of our hope. We trust that through Jesus Christ God has given us decisive answers to the questions that matter in our lives, that life always has the last word. Thus Jesus Christ is our only source of comfort. During worship services, the local Christian congregation comes together to hear the word of God and to speak with God through prayer and song. We are assured of this comfort in the worship service.





## WHAT WE DO

A sense of community,  
sharing our faith, day  
after day.



### Wherever ....

life may lead, the church  
stands alongside people,  
assuring them of the love of  
God, who became human in  
Jesus Christ.



We focus on offering help  
for living and encouraging  
faith.



The church provides  
encouragement and  
comfort, advice and  
guidance.



The church brings people  
together – in all walks of  
life.



St. John's Church  
(Johanneskirche),  
Düsseldorf

## THE CHURCH AND MONEY

Church activities are mainly funded through church tax. Personal income tax serves as the basis for assessment for the church tax. The current church tax rate amounts to 9% of income tax and is collected by the tax offices. The churches pay an administrative fee of 3–4% for this service to the federal tax administration, depending on each federal state. Church tax revenue is spent exclusively on church activities. 60–70% of the funds allocated in church budgets are derived from church tax revenue. Other sources of income are collections during worship, donations, and property rentals. In the case of the Rhineland Church, the local congregations have the right to levy the church tax. They are responsible for their own budgets, but they also share in the costs for activities in the wider community. Around 10% of church tax revenue is used to fund the activities of the regional church.



## WE WORK BOTTOM-UP

The Evangelical Church in the Rhineland has a 'presbyterial-synodical' (conciliar) organisational structure. This means that at every level the leadership is made up of elected members, and that on principle decisions are made by mutual agreement.

### LOCAL CHURCH CONGREGATION / PARISH

elects

### LOCAL CHURCH COUNCIL

elects

**its chair:**  
**church pastor or lay**  
**member of the council**

elects

### DISTRICT SYNOD

elects

**District Synod Council**

**Superintendent**

elects

### REGIONAL SYNOD

elects

**Synod Presidium**  
**(executive board)**

**President**  
**(chair of the presidium)**



Voting during the  
regional synod in  
Bad Neuenahr.





*The church councils are elected in the congregations for a four-year term.*

The church council ("Presbyterium" from Greek: 'council of elders') is responsible for the leadership of the local congregation. In addition to the pastors, the church council is elected from among professional church staff and members of the congregation. Delegates from the church councils form the synod at district level. The district synod is responsible for managing activities that go beyond the local congregational level. It elects the superintendent of the district as well as the district synod council. It also sends representatives to the regional synod, which is the decisive body of the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland.

Both the synod president and the presidium are elected by the members of the regional synod for an eight-year term. The presidium functions as the church executive board between the annual synod meetings. This committee consists of eight clergy, including the president, and eight elected lay members. All committees regard themselves as communities under the guidance of the word of God.

The executive board is bound by the church constitution (Kirchenordnung), by the church laws and by the principles laid down by the regional synod. It supervises the congregations, church districts and church associations. The board presents reports on its activities at the synod meetings.

The work of the church board is supported by the regional church office (Landeskirchenamt). The board also calls upon expert representatives from the local congregations, from offices and institutions as well as from wider society to participate in advisory committees.

The decision-making body of the regional church office is the collegium, its executive group. The president is the official representative of the Rhineland Church externally, such as to the state, the business world and in the public arena.

## PRESIDIUM / CHURCH EXECUTIVE BOARD

Eight clergy and eight elected members from the congregations.

## REGIONAL CHURCH OFFICE

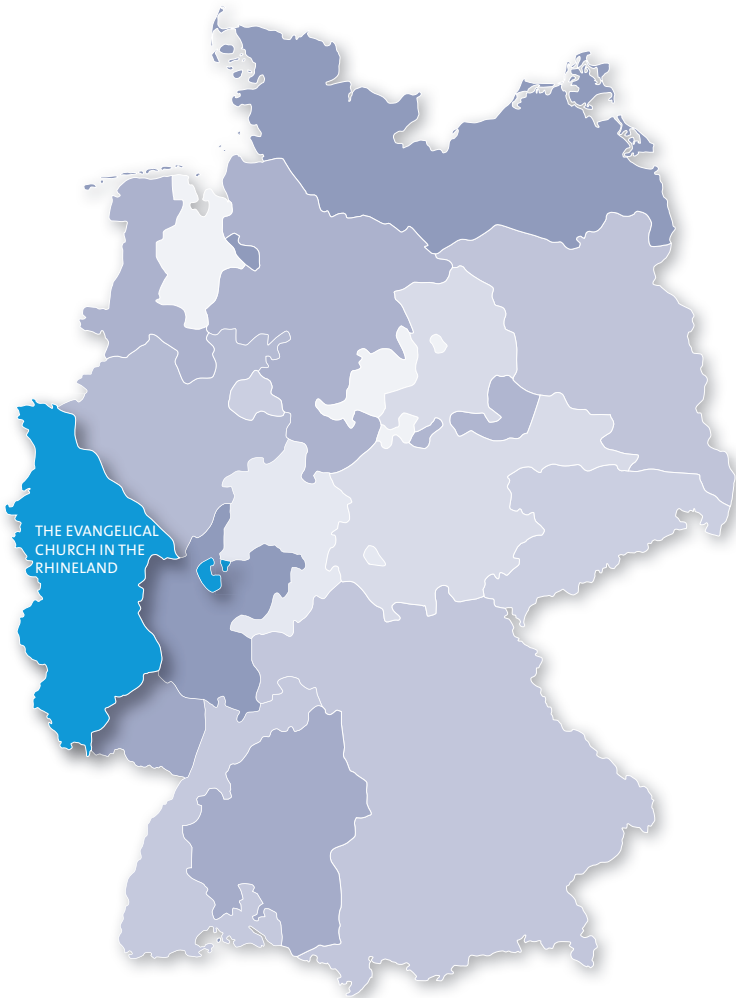
### Collegium (executive group of the regional church office)

- President
- Six full-time members of the church board elected by the regional synod – the two vice presidents plus four executive ministers (Oberkirchenräte) as department heads and the deputy department heads



# NUMBERS, FACTS AND FIGURES

The Evangelical Church in the Rhineland has about 2.66 million members, making it the second-largest of the 20 member churches of the Evangelical Church in Germany. Its 38 church districts are spread over the federal states of North Rhine-Westphalia, Rhineland-Palatinate, Saarland and Hesse.



The majority of the 731 local church congregations (452) are located in North Rhine-Westphalia. There are 180 congregations in Rhineland-Palatinate, 47 in Saarland and 52 in Hesse. More than 78% of all members of the EKIR live in North Rhine-Westphalia.

More than 20,000 people work for the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland, plus an additional 67,000 staff in diaconal institutions.

Over 2,000 clergy serve as pastors. In addition, the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland is supported by 114,700 volunteers (see tables on the following pages). Approximately 8,300 of these are members of the church councils. Others sing in choirs, visit the elderly and the sick or help out during children's services or in youth groups.

DENOMINATIONAL MEMBERSHIP		as at Jan. 1, 2014
Protestants	2,707,000	22,4 %
Catholics	5,309,000	43,9 %
Total population for the church region	12,088,000	100 %

Actual church membership at Jan. 1, 2015 2,662,800

Church training college  
Wuppertal/Bethel



ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS as at 2013	
Baptisms	19,917
Confirmations	22,094
Weddings	4,480
Funerals	32,605
People joining the Church	6,383
People leaving the Church	19,005

SERVICES OF WORSHIP as at 2015	
Services on Sundays and holidays	75,137
among those - family services	7,508
- Holy Communion services	25,545
Weekday services	36,771
among those - school services	18,853
- childrens' services	15,502
- youth services	2,248

WORK FORCE as at 2013/2014	
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#### STAFF

Including full-time, part-time and 'marginally employed' staff

	total
employed by the church (parishes, church districts and other institutions)	20,800
- as pastors/pastors in training	1,975
- other	18,800
in diaconal institutions	79,400

#### VOLUNTEERS

in congregations	114,600
- church councils members	8,300
- in visiting services	8,800
- in childrens' church services	5,400

PLACES OF WORSHIP / BUILDINGS as at 2007	
Places of worship (total)	2,112
Churches and chapels	1,225
Congregation centres with worship spaces	563
Church halls	826
Ministers' houses (2005)	1,252
Other residential buildings (2005)	1,478
Administrative buildings (2005)	165

DIACONAL / SOCIAL WORK INSTITUTIONS as at Jan. 1, 2014		
	Number	spaces/beds
Educational support institutions	94	3,800
Institutions for disabled people	90	6,100
Institutions for the elderly	321	25,900
Daycare centres for the elderly	58	
Hospitals	59	12,500
Counselling centres	281	
Mobile nursing services	128	

EDUCATION as at Jan. 1, 2014		
	Number	spaces
Children's daycare institutions	786	45,300
Family education institutions	14	
Adult education institutions	3	
Schools (Nov. 1, 2014)	10	7,889



## HISTORY

The first Christian congregations in the Rhineland were founded during Roman times. Anglo-Saxon missionaries helped Christianity to flourish in the 8th century. During the Middle Ages, Cologne and its university became a centre of theological thinking and teaching. The heritage of the Rhineland Church goes back to the Reformation period. The first Protestant congregations were formed in the Bergisches Land region, in the county of Moers and in the Rhineland uplands south of the river Ahr. Life for Protestants in most of the Rhineland was that of a diaspora, a minority faith. In the area between the rivers Rhine, Mosel, Nahe and Glan, the new faith was promoted by the territorial rulers of the Palatinate, Sponheim and Nassau. In the Lower Rhine region, the Lutheran faith became widespread, and later on the Reformed faith also took root. Some rulers gave their protection to the new faith, while others fought against it or reluctantly tolerated it.

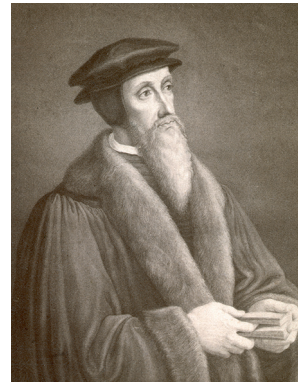


*Seal of the  
General Synod*

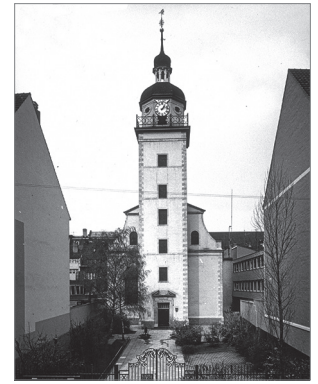
In 1610, 36 delegates from Reformed congregations in the United Duchies of Jülich-Cleves-Berg came together in Duisburg for the General Synod. They laid the foundation for the organisational structure of the church based on a presbyterial-synodical system: autonomous congregations with equality of leadership by members of the clergy and the laity. The General Synod of 1610 is considered to mark the initial establishment of a Protestant church in the Rhineland. Until the early 19th



*Reformer Martin Luther  
(1483–1546)  
Painting by Lucas Cranach  
the Elder, 1532.*



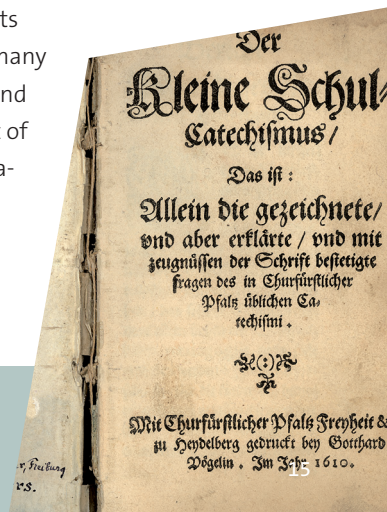
*Frenchman John Calvin (1509–1564)  
was one of the most influential  
reformers along with Luther.*



*Neanderkirche of the Reformed  
congregation in Düsseldorf,  
Consecration 1684.*

century, the different faiths co-existed in the Rhineland, with Catholic, Reformed and Lutheran congregations. Some did not get along with each other very well, while others showed a remarkable and visionary sense of unity. Around 150 territorial rulers tried to offer them protection as laid down by the Peace of Augsburg and the Peace of Westphalia.

It was Napoleon I who first ordered the "religious parties" to merge into larger administrative units. The 1815 Congress of Vienna gave the Rhineland province to Prussia, laying the foundation for the borders of the Rhineland church which remain virtually unchanged until today. Reformed and Lutheran Christians came together in the "Prussian Union" in 1817. Pietistic and revivalist movements brought a breath of new life to many congregations during the 18th and 19th century. They were the root of the social outreach and missionary programmes that we take for granted today.



*Heidelberg Catechism  
printed by Gotthard Vögelin,  
Heidelberg, 1610.*



*Synod Members at the Confessing Church Synod in Wuppertal-Barmen, May 1934.*



*Seal of the Confessing Synod.*

During the struggle of the church against National Socialism, many congregations in the Rhineland declared their commitment to independence and their allegiance to the Bible. The groundbreaking Barmen Theological Declaration, adopted by the synod in the Gemark church in the Barmen-Gemark parish in Wuppertal, was directed against the National Socialist state's claim to absolute authority.

This background history has shaped the church in the Rhineland right up to today. The church accompanies the people in its 731 parishes on their path through life, particularly through baptisms, confirmations, weddings and funerals.

Since faith cannot exist without taking responsibility for the human community, the church in the Rhineland is strongly dedicated to social welfare work (Diakonie) and to socio-political advocacy. Activities include pastoral care and counselling, church music and education, as well as maintaining ecumenical ties with partner churches.



*Bronze sculpture by Ulle Hees in memory of the first Confessing Church Synod of the Evangelical Church in Wuppertal, 1934. While the figures at the front are performing the Nazi salute, the group at the back is facing away from them, gathered around the Bible and looking towards the Gemark church.*

## PARTNERSHIPS

The Evangelical Church in the Rhineland (EKiR) cooperates with churches all over the world, because the word of God is for all of humanity. This community is known as the 'Ecumenical Movement'. Fostering the ecumenical community of churches is highly important to the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland, as stated in Article 1 of the church constitution. This principle comes alive in the ecumenical partnerships of the local church congregations, as well as in the church districts and at the regional church level.

The EKiR is a member of the World Council of Churches (WCC), the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE), and the Conference of European Churches (CEC). Relations with the Roman-Catholic Church, the Orthodox Churches and Free Churches are maintained through the Association of Christian Churches (ACK). Going beyond the Christian ecumenical movement, the Rhineland Church is particularly committed to Christian-Jewish dialogue as well as to good neighbourly relations with other religions, above all with Islam.

Together with 33 other churches from Africa, Asia and Germany as well as a religious foundation, the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland has responsibility for the United Evangelical Mission (UEM). This community understands its mission to be sharing in the proclamation of the Gospel, to improve peoples' living conditions and to strive for justice, peace and the integrity of creation.



*Guests at the UEM General Assembly in Wuppertal 2014.*



## DIACONAL WORK (DIAKONIE)

Diakonie is the welfare and social work of the Protestant Church, arising from the conviction that faith should be visible not only in preaching and worship but also in practical activity.

The foundation of the church social service goes back to a speech given by the theologian Johann Hinrich Wichern at the Kirchentag in Wittenberg in 1848, in which he praised "saving love" as the highest of the church's activities. In 1836 Theodor and Friederike Fliedner had already founded the Kaiserwerth Diakonie in Düsseldorf. This is now one of the large-scale diaconal institutions in the Rhineland.

The social work carried out in the Diakonie Rhineland-Westphalia-Lippe consists of 4,900 institutions, including old peoples' homes, workshops for people with disabilities, daycare centres for children, advice centres for addicts and drug users, and debt counselling. With 130,000 full-time and 200,000 part-time staff it is the largest social work organisation of any of the regional churches and one of the biggest umbrella bodies in the sphere of non-statutory welfare provision.



## JOINING THE CHURCH

### Who do I contact if I want to join the church?

The pastor in your congregation will be happy to make an appointment to speak with you. However you are welcome to contact any of the admission offices of the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland without having previously spoken to your local pastor. You can find the locations here:

**[www.ekir.de/url/QBe](http://www.ekir.de/url/QBe)**

### Which documents do I need to bring with me?

Please bring your ID card or passport.

If you wish to re-join the church, having previously left, please bring documentation of your leaving the church (leaving certificate) and, if possible, your baptism certificate.

Photography:  
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