

Dear Scholars,
dear Alumnae and Alumni,
dear Partners,
dear Friends of the Catholic Academic Exchange Service,

from a Christian perspective, Advent gives voice to something that is highly unusual – even unsettling – in our cultural present: it speaks of someone who is coming and who will radically transform the world; a “Saviour”, as he is called in the Christmas Mass, where this title is ascribed to the newborn of Nazareth.

Someone is coming and will make all things new (Rev 21:5). At first, this is simply a declaration, an announcement – one that, and this remains a provocation to this day, one may choose to believe or not. It may also be dismissed as wishful thinking, as mere dreaming. Even today, this message remains a provocation, because the one who has come – Jesus – remains elusive and hidden: someone who said that he would remain and be present “always, to the end of the age” (Matt 28:20b), yet whom one cannot see or recognise directly. This situation of uncertainty is poignantly captured in the biblical scene where the angel Gabriel tells Mary that she will conceive a child. Someone will come – but in the end, the angel leaves her, and she is left entirely alone with the announcement. She believes it – that someone will come; in her case, the child who is Jesus.



The cultural present of at least the Western hemisphere is shaped by something different: by the conviction that one must take matters resolutely into one’s own hands – to effect change and improvement, to assert the rights of every human being with determination, to prevent disasters, to confront injustice and dehumanisation, to guard against dangers and, in any case, to act preventively in the face of potential crises. In short, we must take the initiative and actively promote positive developments ourselves. Activity is necessary and, for the time being, the only source of hope for a positive future, both personally and socially. Action and engagement are important – there can be no doubt about that. Christ himself demands them. Yet, in the final analysis, the biblical logic runs in the opposite direction: things will turn out well. Someone is coming – long-awaited, as the books of the Old Testament so often attest. God comes and will set everything right. This paradoxical orientation towards the future confronts us starkly in the run-up to Christmas and at Christmas itself. That someone comes who will then remain in this world forever – until the end of the world, of which we can form no clear conception – this is the provocation of the Christmas message. It alone is enough to give pause for thought: the consequence is that we ultimately live from a message, not from plans and strategies. It is not action and activity that bring about lasting good, but the receiving of what comes, and, in biblical terms, the trusting praise of God. “O come, O come, Emmanuel”, says a German Advent hymn that speaks of longing and promise.

This also poses a profound question for the KAAD. We seek to prepare the world for the future through education and engagement, to take up and address the major challenges facing our countries, and to be forward-looking in our personal lives. I believe that we live from and within this tension, which may well appear as a contradiction. From the proclamation itself, we do not know whether or how it will be fulfilled. But we do know that something new and unforeseen is possible, and that it can change many things. There are countless experiences of this in every life. The unplanned. Perhaps this is the work of the Spirit of God, whom Jesus, the child of Christmas, brought into the world and continues to bring.

Yours



Fr Dr Hans Langendörfer SJ
President of KAAD

Federal Order of Merit for KAAD Alumnus Dr Ralph Nyadu-Addo



During his state visit to Ghana, *Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier* awarded *KAAD alumnus Dr Ralph Nyadu-Addo* the Federal Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany in recognition of his contributions to German-Ghanaian relations. In his tribute, *Frank-Walter Steinmeier* described *Ralph Nyadu-Addo* as a “pioneer of German-Ghanaian friendship” and as a bridge-builder who, over many years, has inspired students, promoted academic exchange, and helped building partnerships. As a Senior Lecturer at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), *Ralph Nyadu-Addo* combines academic cooperation with social responsibility. In collaboration with German universities, he has developed programmes that strengthen academic exchange, practice-oriented training and entrepreneurial perspectives. He received funding from the KAAD for doing a Master’s degree in Small Enterprise Promotion and Training as well as for his doctoral studies at Leipzig University.

KAAD Alumnus Fr Dr Carlos Ignacio Man Ging SJ Appointed Rector in Ecuador



On 7 October 2025, *KAAD alumnus Fr Dr Carlos Ignacio Man Ging SJ* was appointed Rector of the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador (PUCE). After studies in Ecuador, Chile and Germany, he completed his doctorate at Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich with support from KAAD, focusing on the prevention of sexual abuse. Since 2016, *Fr Carlos* has been teaching at PUCE, most recently as Dean of the Ecclesiastical Faculty of Philosophy and Theology. In this role, he established the world’s first Spanish-language Master’s programme in abuse prevention and developed interdisciplinary programmes in ethics, spirituality and pastoral practice. His work also has an international dimension, including involvement in synodal processes and in ecclesiastical advisory bodies. With his appointment, *Fr Carlos* assumes responsibility for one of the country’s leading universities and at the same time sends a strong signal of the impact of KAAD alumni in the Church and society.

Racism and Discrimination – Everyday Experiences of International Students Students Findings from a KAAD Survey



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To assess the extent to which international students in Germany experience racism and discrimination, the KAAD conducted an anonymous survey in October. The responses indicate that international students are affected by exclusion in various ways, particularly in connection with, and depending on, their perceived origin or skin colour. Sixty-three per cent of respondents stated that they had either personally experienced discrimination on the basis of attributed origin, skin colour or nationality, or had witnessed such incidents as observers. Several scholars reported overt racist hostility, alongside numerous instances of everyday racism in daily life. At the same time, a clear majority indicated that they generally feel safe and accepted in Germany. However, almost half of those surveyed pointed out that the political discourse has changed, which in turn has had a negative impact on their sense of security.

The KAAD will continue to analyse the results and, based on that, develop measures aimed at awareness-raising, support and prevention. The goal is to gain a more precise understanding of the situation of international students and to contribute the insights gained to relevant academic and societal debates.

EDUCATIONAL AND NETWORKING EVENTS

KAAD International Academy in Indonesia – Food Security in Times of Global Challenges



This year's International Academy took place from 24 to 26 October in Semarang, Indonesia, and focused on "Food security for Southeast Asia in the face of climate change and conflict". In his opening remarks, *KAAD President Fr Dr Hans Langendörfer SJ* emphasised the value of places "where the wisdom of local experience meets the insights of global research". Central to the discussions were questions of competition for urban land and its impact on food systems, presented from an urban planning perspective by *KAAD alumnus Dr Wisnu Pradoto* of Diponegoro University. Maritime regions were also brought into focus: *KAAD alumna Dr Regina Bacalso* from the Coastal Resources Center at the University of Rhode Island illustrated how civil society organisations and fishing communities are working towards sustainable management models within the framework of the "Fish Right" programme. Complementing these perspectives, *KAAD alumnus Dr Pius Sugeng Prasetyo* of Parahyangan Catholic University explained how models of urban agriculture and circular economy strengthen social participation and local responsibility. The link between theory and practice became tangible during a

visit to the Jesuit agricultural training centre *Kursus Pertanian Taman Tani*. A joint Eucharistic celebration with *Fr Dr Hans Langendörfer SJ* and *Fr Dr Simon Petrus Lili Tjahjadi SJ* provided the Academy with a spiritual framework that brought reflection and encounter together. Reflecting on this connection, *Secretary General Dr Nora Kalbarczyk* underlined that education always entails "service to one's neighbour" and is fundamentally oriented towards solidarity. Personal exchange and a "culture of encounter", she noted, are essential for an education that "serves society in order to promote the common good". [Further details can be found in the report on our website.](#)



How the Circular Economy Shapes the Future – KASWA Seminar in Ghana

This year's seminar of the West African KAAD alumni network KASWA, held at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) in Kumasi, focused on fundamental questions of ecological responsibility. Against the backdrop of unequal global material flows and the consequences of climate change, the discussions centred on the circular economy, sustainable resource use, and the role of science and education. A particularly striking example of this interplay is the research project "PlasticWasteRecycle", developed by *KAAD alumna Professor Marian Asantewah Nkansah* together with *Professor Johannes Mawuli Awudza* (KNUST) and *Professor Stephan Scholl*, liaison lecturer and member of the Academic Council of the KAAD. Emerging from encounters at the KAAD Annual Convention 2023 and now awarded the German-African Innovation Award (GAIIA), the project demonstrates how environmental chemistry, process engineering, and international cooperation can work together. The presentation of this project also shaped the thematic orientation of the seminar. In interdisciplinary panels, scholars from environmental chemistry, social sciences, theology, and engineering discussed technological innovations in plastics recycling, the social consequences of informal waste management systems, and the importance of institutional responsibility. The contributions made clear that ecological transformation requires not only technical solutions, but also awareness-raising, political engagement, and local initiatives. Numerous participants presented their own projects, illustrating the close interdependence between ecological challenges and issues of social justice. [Further information is available on our website.](#)



Synodal Impulses and Academic Networking in Latin America

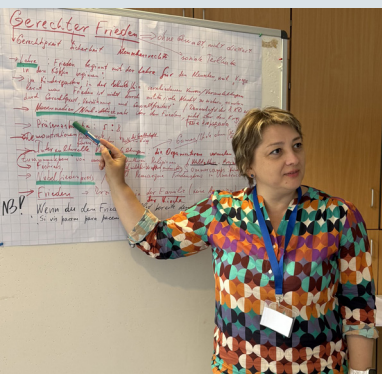


In October, *Dr Mirjam Rossa*, Head of the Latin America Desk, travelled to Argentina and Uruguay to deepen the partnerships of the KAAD in Latin America and to further expand academic exchange. The journey took her to Córdoba, Santa Fe, Buenos Aires and Montevideo, and provided opportunities for encounters with long-standing partner institutions as well as with alumnae and alumni of the KAAD. The stay in Córdoba was of particular significance due to participation in the XV International and Interdisciplinary Alumni Seminar of the Latin America-Germany Scholarship Programme (ICALA). Under the title “Synodality, democracy and gender justice”, questions of ecclesial participation and the responsibility of Christians for democratic cultures in the region were

discussed. *Professor Margit Eckholt*, Chair of ICALA and member of the Academic Council of the KAAD, opened the programme with reflections on a dialogical and learning Church. *KAAD alumnus Father Carlos Ignacio Man Ging SJ* linked synodal processes with questions of institutional responsibility in the prevention of abuse. Following this, *Mirjam Rossa* held discussions at universities in Santa Fe, Buenos Aires and Montevideo on future forms of academic cooperation. Central to these exchanges was the question of how Latin American and German universities can jointly assume responsibility for the education and development of young talent.

[Further information is available on our website.](#)

Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe: Peace Ethics in the Context of Personal Experience



For many scholars from Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the reality of war and political instability is part of everyday life. Against this backdrop, the seminar “Current Challenges in Peace Ethics” addressed the question of how peace ethics can be responsibly shaped under conditions of ongoing violence. The thematic introduction was provided by *Dr Markus Patenge* (German Commission for Justice and Peace), who outlined key strands of current debates in peace ethics and highlighted the tension between normative principles and political realities. Building on the personal experiences of the participants, an intensive exchange developed on the political, legal, and social challenges posed by the conflicts and tensions that characterise many countries in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. A shift in perspective was offered by a thematically framed guided tour of the highest constitutional bodies in Karlsruhe. Visits to the Federal Constitutional Court, the Federal Court of Justice, and the Office of the Federal Public Prosecutor highlighted the

importance of the rule of law for peace and security and formed the starting point for subsequent discussion rounds. These focused on the role of law in addressing conflicts, the limits of legal procedures, the potential of civil society engagement in times of crisis, and the ways in which media coverage shapes perceptions of war – particularly with regard to forms of targeted disinformation. [Further information is available on our website.](#)

Middle East: Reconstruction, Resilience and Transformation



In November, a seminar held in Berlin focused on post-war reconstruction in the Middle East. Over the course of four days, current and former scholars of the KAAD worked together with invited speakers on the political, social and spiritual dimensions of these processes. Contributions from Syria, Lebanon, the Palestinian Territories and Egypt, alongside analyses of international humanitarian law and developments in the Gaza Strip, sharpened awareness of the region’s complex challenges. A discussion with *Sabrina Sperlich*, Coordinator of the International Parliamentary Scholarship Programme of the German Bundestag for Arabic-speaking countries, as well as exchanges with members of the parliamentary groups of Arabic-speaking states of the Near and Middle East and Egypt, highlighted the role of political frameworks, personal experience and professional expertise in these debates. A workshop on “Peacebuilding and Reconciliation” and an urban-geographical excursion exploring traces of reconstruction in Berlin rounded off the programme. The concluding discussions made clear how indispensable networking, diaspora expertise and long-term cooperation are for sustainable processes of renewal – and how profoundly personal life stories and spiritual orientation shaped the shared learning space. [Read more on our website.](#)

Alongside these formats, further seminars and encounters took place in the second half of 2025 in Germany and abroad. These included, among others, a workshop on doctoral studies and a digital seminar on return and reintegration, the spiritual days at the Benedictine Archabbey of St Martin in Beuron, and a study and pilgrimage trip to Rome. In addition, thematic seminars set specific emphases, for example on education and educational justice in Latin America, on multilateralism in Africa, on economic and social interconnections in East Africa within the framework of the KASEA seminar in Tanzania, on the reassessment of development cooperation in the KASHA seminar in Zimbabwe, and on water policy and regional integration in the KASSA seminar in Ethiopia. The annual programme was complemented by local KAAD meetings in Bayreuth, Stuttgart, and Berlin.

PERSONNEL

Change at the Head Office

At the end of the year, several changes took place at the head office of the KAAD: Since 1 December, *Nadine Schuster* has been supporting the Middle East Desk; prior to this, she worked as a neighbourhood manager in a flood relief project within Diakonie's disaster response. *Anna Gldenring*, who had previously supported the Desk as a student assistant, left the KAAD on 30 September. The Eastern Europe Desk has been strengthened since 15 October by *Annette Verhoeven*. She worked for many years at the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and now continues to contribute her experience in the field of education during her retirement. As of 5 December, *Irena Rube* has also taken over responsibility for accounting at KAAD. The business graduate most recently worked in the translation sector, where she was responsible for commercial and administrative tasks. *Ute Baumgart*, who previously held this position, will be responsible for the KAAD-Adveniat programme.



Nadine Schuster, Annette Verhoeven and Irena Rube (left to right)

Sustainable Development in Focus: Hermann Weber Scholarship for Joseph Mohammed Soale



Joseph Mohammed Soale from Damongo in northern Ghana combines ecological sustainability with social justice in his academic and practical work. Growing up in a region where access to resources is closely linked to education and participation has profoundly shaped his scholarly perspective to this day. After completing a KAAD-funded Master's degree in Environmental Governance at the University of Freiburg, Joseph Mohammed Soale worked for several years in the fields of land management and climate change adaptation in Ghana, including for the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ). Building on his experience in agricultural development, he founded the enterprise "Potter's Farms and Consult", which promotes ecological farming methods and sustainable value creation. In addition, he initiated the "Global Sustainability Lab", bringing together experts from various disciplines to develop innovative responses to the impacts of climate change in West Africa.

These years of practical engagement led him back to academia: in 2020, *Joseph Mohammed Soale* took up a teaching position at the University for Development Studies in Tamale and decided to pursue his questions of justice, resource distribution, and urban development in a doctoral project. With the support of a KAAD scholarship at Humboldt University of Berlin, he is researching how the digitalisation of land ownership and land administration is transforming social dynamics in African cities, with particular attention to processes of gentrification and displacement. In recognition of this close connection between research and social engagement, *Joseph Mohammed Soale* was awarded KAAD's Hermann Weber Scholarship in 2025.

Recipient of the Peter Hnermann Foundation Award of the KAAD 2026

For her outstanding contribution to church-based development work and to strengthening social participation in Zimbabwe, *Dr Locardia Shayamunda* has been awarded the 15th KAAD Peter Hnermann Foundation Award.

The environmental scientist, who holds a doctorate from the University of Freiburg, has for many years shaped the work of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Harare and is a key actor in Zimbabwe in the fields of education and social justice. Her contributions to capacity building, climate adaptation, and rural development – as well as her commitment to education and human rights work – have had an impact far beyond her immediate professional context. Since her return to Zimbabwe, she has also been a central point of reference for the KAAD network in the country and, through her experience and extensive networking, strengthens exchange between the Church, academia, and civil society.



OUTLOOK FOR THE YEAR 2026

KAAD Annual Convention 2026:

“Self-Portraits and Boundaries: In Search of Belonging in a World Marked by Crisis”



KAAD Jahresakademie 2026

Selbstbildnisse und Abgrenzungen:
Auf der Suche nach Zugehörigkeit
in einer krisenhaften Welt
11. bis 14. Juni 2026

The world is shaped by profound crises, including climate change, political instability, and war, as well as global inequality. In this crisis-laden global situation, one question becomes increasingly urgent: Who am I? Where do I belong? Belonging can be a source of strength – in family and neighbourhood relationships, in communities of solidarity. Wherever people recognise one another, assume responsibility for each other and create spaces of trust, experiences of genuine belonging can emerge. At the same time, however, responses to the question of belonging are increasingly shaped by processes of exclusion. These take many forms: authoritarian movements are gaining strength, and fears of migration or cultural change are being politically instrumentalised. In the course of an alleged clarification of “belonging”, new exclusive identity constructs emerge, often accompanied by patriarchal and nationalist patterns of thought. Social networks amplify the reach and impact of these self-portraits.

In this context, the consequences of colonialism and cultural dominance continue to have an effect to this day. In many places, it is indigenous communities in particular that are struggling for recognition of their identity and living space. At the same time, it can be observed that in some contexts, religious movements and actors also contribute to exclusion by emphasising religious identity as a marker of distinction. The KAAD Annual Convention brings together representatives from academia, politics and the Church to reflect on self-images and mechanisms of exclusion from a global perspective and to develop shared points of orientation.

KAAD-International Academy 2026:

“Artificial Intelligence and Social Change: Impacts, Dynamics and Perspectives in the Latin American Context”

Artificial intelligence is profoundly transforming lived realities – in healthcare as well as in education, research, the arts, communication and spirituality. While technological developments are advancing with considerable momentum in parts of Latin America, this progress simultaneously raises specific questions concerning social participation, ethical governance and cultural embeddedness. The Academy seeks to provide a space for these areas of conflict and to foster a dialogue that does not merely describe technological advances, but places questions of social agency and responsibility at its centre. The KAAD International Academy 2026 is dedicated to the social, cultural and ethical implications of artificial intelligence from a Latin American perspective. A particular focus will be placed on the theme of global health: how is AI transforming medical diagnostics, healthcare provision and access to knowledge? What risks arise – for example, through unequal data availability, a lack of transparency in automated decision-making processes, or dependence on privately owned infrastructures? The Academy understands itself as a forum for dialogue between academia, the Church and society, and concurrently as a space in which ethical questions and international cooperation are brought together and discussed collectively.



“Take Courage, Rise Up!” – KAAD Programme at the Katholikentag

The 104th Katholikentag in Würzburg once again offers the KAAD the opportunity to engage, together with its scholars, in key questions concerning Church and society. About forty scholars from approximately twenty countries will be taking part, and the KAAD will be represented with its own stand along the Church Mile. A multi-day seminar entitled “Care for Creation: Faith and Ecology in Times of Climate Change” will combine attendance at selected events with shared reflection. In addition, the KAAD will jointly organise a panel discussion on global health and international justice together with Medmissio and the German Leprosy and Tuberculosis Relief Association. Participation will be rounded off by a workshop which, in cooperation with the Federal Association of the Catholic Church at Universities and the Sant’Egidio Community in Würzburg, will address experiences of loneliness and the value of community among young adults.