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For Kenya's Christians like Mekka - Delegation from Africa in Gerlingen/Germany

Delegation from Africa promenades in Gerlingen/Germany on the traces of missionary Johannes Rebmann

Gerlingen. Representatives of different evangelic churches in Kenya visited Gerlingen. On the way from the Church Congress in Cologne the 19 Kenyans wanted to walk on tracks of their missionary Johannes Rebmann.

Translated into English from the German text of Mr. EBERHARD WEIN



Photo: Factum/Wolschendorf

The First Councilor of the town Gerlingen Wolfgang Steng welcomes the Delegation from Kenya at Petrushof.

Reverend Moses Nthukah imagined the town Gerlingen like that: In the center there is the house of Johannes Rebmann and around it there are lots of churches. "And all residents are good Christians - of course," said Nthukah.

Now he is standing in front of the small timbered winegrower's house in Kirchstraße (Church Street), where the missionary was born in 1825, and he is overjoyed. The Reverend, who led last week a group of 150 people of his home country to the Church Congress in Cologne, found during his visit six years ago already out, that there are not as much churches in Gerlingen as in this fantasy. But at that time the Rebmann House looked like a ruin. In the meantime a foundation was built up, the house was restructured for 700,000 Euros and on the ground floor a missionary's room was set up.

No one in Kenya would have understood if the house really would have been knocked down. Rebmann is there not regarded as discoverer of the snow covered Kilimanjaro, but as the most important missionary who brought the Gospel to East Africa and lived there for 29 years. More than 70 percent of all Kenyans number themselves among the Christianity, the most of them belong to a protestant church. "Rebmann is as famous as Martin Luther," says Nthukah.

This realized also Reverend Edzard Albers, who stayed during his theology study for one semester abroad in Mombasa. "When the people realized that I come from Germany, they asked first of all about Rebmann," she says. But he had no idea because he comes from Oldenburg (in northern Germany).

Today Albers is Reverend in Biberach. 19 members of the Kenyan Church Congress Delegation will stay for the next days in his parish. On the way to there a stop in Gerlingen was taken for granted. They were welcomed from Reverend Ursula Ripp-Hilt and the Councilor of the town, Wolfgang Steng.

"Gerlingen is for us like Mekka for the Moslems", says Nthukah. And that is the same on the other side of the black continent. Also to Ghana there are contacts, the king of Kroboland visited several times. There the other important missionary from Gerlingen left his marks: Johannes Zimmermann. By the way - he lived in the house on the other side of the street.

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