



# FIRST ENCOUNTERS

*“God was working in my heart and already preparing me for my future calling, even at the age of nine.”*



Hans-Georg preaching in the rain forest



The Hoprich family in Papua New Guinea



During a visit from Surui Indians in Pimenta Bueno, Brazil, 2016

Sometime in the summer of 1964 a missionary event was held in the Lutheran Church Hall in Gerlingen, Germany, which was then an insignificant suburb of Stuttgart. At the age of nine my parents sent me on my own to the session which was actually for the adults.

## UNFORGETTABLE IMPRESSIONS

How I stared at the South American Indian man! He was lean and tall (about 1.90m / 6ft 2ins) with long glossy black hair. I can still vividly recall his protruding front teeth. He'd been given an ill-fitting dark-coloured suit to wear, the sleeves and trouser legs were way too short for him. Next to him stood a much shorter man, James Rathlef the Mission Director and founder of the German pioneer mission to Indians (DIPM), who looked up at him in expectation. Rathlef talked about Paraguay, the home country of the Indian man.

There were exciting stories about surviving in the jungle, and then he spoke to the foreign man in a foreign language! I was fascinated by anything new and unfamiliar. The Indian man talked, and Rathlef translated. He spoke about the Lord Jesus who had set him – and many others from his tribe – free from fear and hostility. I would remember this encounter for the rest of my life. It sparked a longing in me to know more about these people and their way of life. Back then I had no idea that in 2016 I would be invited to a 'Mate' Tea Ceremony with the Brazilian Surui Indians in the Amazon region!

## GOD CALLS CHILDREN'S HEARTS

Shortly afterwards I was given a birthday present by the Sunday School: a little book about the sinking of the Titanic (that was the sort of thing they gave to children 😊!). In it I found the concept of God's mission to the world and it stirred me afresh!

This was how God was working in my heart and already preparing me for my future calling, even at the age of nine. I also need to mention the children's activities in the DIPM mission tent which were planned with great dedication and creativity – including the huge stuffed crocodile at the entrance to the tent!

Whether in nursery schools, primary schools, confirmation classes or in Sunday school classes, church holidays or missionary festivals – we've always been delighted to seize the opportunity to tell children about missionary work – it can never start too early! 57 years have gone by since that first striking encounter with the man from the Indian tribe in Paraguay. This year Margret and I can look back in gratitude over the 38 years that we've been in missionary service with the DMG. From our hearts we'd like to say THANK YOU for your faithful support! 🟢

