

History

Historical sketch of the school

The Bible school ministry for the Church of God in Europe began in 1949 under the leadership of the Reverend Robert Seyda, an American of German descent who was ministering in Germany under the appointment of the Church of God World Missions Board. The war had just ended, and the German Church of God was in a state of revival. Sensing the need for leadership training and evangelism, Seyda invited young men and women to Schorndorf for a Bible Training Course that lasted two years, 1949-51. About twenty students enrolled in the program, many of whom went into part or full-time ministry in the German Church of God. Seyda returned to a pastorate in America, and seven years later the Bible School started again under the auspices of the Church of God World Missions.

Reverend Paul H. Walker, Executive Secretary of Church of God World Missions, convinced the German Church of God overseer, Reverend Herman Lauster, of the need to establish a Bible School in Germany. He arranged for the missions offering at the 1958 General Assembly to be designated for the purchase of a suitable building for the school in the Rudersberg-Krehwinkel area. The Reverend Lamar McDaniel and his wife Ardys were appointed by the World Missions Board to direct the new school. In the fall of 1962, the school was placed under the leadership of the German Overseer, Reverend Lambert Delong, and moved to the local Church of God near Heilbronn. Two years later (1964), at the request of the first Superintendent of the Church of God in Europe, Reverend Vessie D. Hargraves, the German Bible school moved to Switzerland. It became an international school, taking on the name International Bible Seminary (I.B.S). This was a significant turning point in the school's history.

The internationalization of the school brought with it bi-lingual instruction (English with a translation into German), a broadening of opportunities for training and ministry, and a network of personal relationships throughout the Church of God in Europe. The school was placed under the leadership of the European Superintendent, Reverend William Alton, and administered by a Director, Reverend Paul Lauster. Specific difficulties, however, (high cost of living, problems with visas, isolation from local churches, etc.) led the leadership to return the school to Germany. After six years in Switzerland, the school was relocated to Rudersberg (Baden-Württemberg).

Church of God World Missions appointed Reverend Heinrich Scherz as president of the new school in Rudersberg, and the name of the school was changed to European Bible Seminary (EBS). The purchase of an existing physical facility in Rudersberg and the expansion of this facility was made possible through the Youth World Evangelism Appeal Project (YWEA) in 1974. In 1980 the Seminary again received a substantial monetary gift from the Church of God as starting capital for an endowment fund and the purchase of additional property for future expansion. The newly

appointed Superintendent of Europe, Dr. Herbert Walker brought extensive educational experience from his previous work as Academic Dean of the denomination's institution of higher learning in America (Lee University). He worked with Reverend Scherz in extending the training to a three-year curriculum that combined an excellent academic program with a strong emphasis on practical ministries. In a short time, students were attending EBS from Germany, England, Scotland, France, Spain, Italy, Yugoslavia, the USA, Israel, and Africa. The multi-cultural, multi-national makeup of the student body and faculty has been a constant characteristic of the school since its internationalization in Switzerland. The ongoing financial support and scholarship assistance provided by the Church of God World Missions and the European Superintendents have helped to make this possible.

During the 1980's the school successfully built bridges to other evangelical and Pentecostal denominations throughout Europe. In 1980 the school became a founding member of the European Pentecostal Theological Association (EPTA). The European integration encouraged a growing interest in the school from other church movements throughout Europe as well as additional European faculty. In 1988 the Seminary became a general member of the European Evangelical Accrediting Association (EEAA) with the goal of seeking full accreditation. The school was also beginning to recognize the need to better serve the needs of its constituency by supplementing residential studies with Distance Learning Programs. President Scherz and Philip Morris, a teacher and later president of the seminary, played a key role in organizing Distance Learning Programs. Extension centers and teaching missions were soon organized throughout Europe. As the program solidified and expanded under the leadership of President Morris it made the Seminary's Foundations Course available through distance learning and helped to integrate the program into the denomination's Ministerial Internship Program (MIP). The name of the expanded extension programs of the Seminary was changed to European Schools of Christian Ministry (ESCM) and the distance learning activities of the Seminary were formally organized as a Department of External Studies with a part-time director, Reverend Peter Thomas. The ESCM program was soon expanded to include a Second-year curriculum leading to the Certificate in Christian Ministry and Dr. Carl Simpson became the resident Director of the ESCM, the name changed to Extension Schools of Christian Ministries.

As early as 1990 the Seminary began offering additional training for nationals who held a Bible School Diploma but desired advanced training so as to become certified to teach courses in the ESCM centers. In 1991, under the presidency of Dr. Edward Williams (1989-92), the European Bible Seminary began a partnership agreement with the Church of God Theological Seminary to offer graduate courses on the campus of EBS. A number of courses were offered by visiting professors from the Seminary in Cleveland.

In 1996 the Seminary President, Dr. John Sims, began a dialogue with the Church of God Theological Seminary in Cleveland concerning the expansion of the graduate courses into a full extension program. Beginning in the fall of 1999 regular courses leading to the Master of Arts in Church Ministries were offered as short ten-day modules and on a commuting basis, under the directorship of Dr. Paul Schmidgall. This part-time In-Service Model was designed to be the foundation of a future full-time Master's program in theological studies, aimed at training highly qualified leadership for the Church of God in Europe, the CIS, and the Middle East.

During the late 90's the school experienced steady growth and took on an unprecedented international character as more students from Eastern Europe and Africa began attending the seminary. It soon became evident that the facility in Rudersberg would not be adequate for future growth. In February 2001 the EBS Board of Directors voted to move the school to Freudenstadt-Kniebis. A transfer of property was arranged with a Church of God related association that had operated a hotel and home for the aged on the site. In the summer of 2002, the Seminary moved its geographical location to Kniebis, near Freudenstadt, and changed the name of the school to European Theological Seminary. The building in Rudersberg that had served the Seminary well for thirty years had become too small and was exchanged for a much larger facility and beautiful grounds in the majestic surroundings of the Black Forest. Through an extraordinarily generous gift of an American donor, Mr. John Gregory, along with substantial gifts from the Charlotte Central Church of God, the German Church of God, and the Department of Ministerial Development, the existing structure was renovated (partially through the assistance of the Men and Women of Action) and a beautiful new building (housing a chapel, classrooms, student center, and other facilities) was added. In its first year in Kniebis, the school experienced a record enrollment. The new school and facilities were dedicated to God and His service on May 25, 2003.

The European Evangelical Accrediting Association (now known as ECTE – European Council for Theological Education) has also accepted the Seminary's Diploma program for accreditation at level B, (comparable to a Vocational Bachelor of Theology, B.Th. Equivalent). This is now offered as a Learning Opportunity at EQF-Level 6 (European Quality Framework). The Seminary has been approved for many years by the educational authorities of the State of Baden-Württemberg (Germany) as a private school for professional training.

In 2007 a cooperation agreement was signed with Lee University, Cleveland, TN, to offer master's level post-graduate degrees in the areas of Counseling Psychology and Biblical Studies using the part-time In-Service model, and these have proven to be very popular. In 2015 Counseling Psychology ceased to be offered and was replaced 2014 by the MSc in Marriage and Family Studies. After fourteen years in office, Dr. Paul Schmidgall stepped down as President to return to Israel. He was replaced by Dr. Stephen Darnell. In 2019 the two master's programs were accredited in Germany by Evalag and are offered for part-time study as the M.A. Marriage and Family Studies and the M.A. Pentecostal and Charismatic Theology. Reverend Manuel Martin-Arroyo was installed as president in September 2022.

School Presidents

Name	Place	Year
Reverend Robert Seyda	Schorndorf, Germany	1949-1951
School inactive		1951-1958

Reverend Lamar McDaniel	Krehwinkel, Germany	1958-1962
Reverend Lambert Delong	Heilbronn, Germany	1962-1964
Reverend William Alton	Wienacht, Switzerland	1964-1968
Reverend William Henry	Wienacht, Switzerland	1968-1970
School inactive		1970-1972
Reverend Heinrich Scherz	Rudersberg, Germany	1973-1989
Reverend Dr. Edward Williams	Rudersberg, Germany	1989-1992
Reverend Philip C. Morris	Rudersberg, Germany	1992-1996
Reverend Dr. John A. Sims	Rudersberg and Kniebis, Germany	1996-2004
Reverend Dr. Paul Schmidgall	Kniebis, Germany	2004-2018
Reverend Dr. Stephen Darnell	Kniebis, Germany	2018-2022
Reverend Manuel Martin-Arroyo	Kniebis, Germany	2022-present

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