

Eglise évangélique mennonite de Tavannes
Chemin de Belfond 37 - CH-2710 Tavannes (Switzerland) - www.eemt.ch

Information Concerning the Purchase and Transformation of a Military Building

The church Eglise Evangélique Mennonite of Tavannes is made up of 160 members, 150 children (0 to 16 years old) and around 50 regular guests. We have recently acquired a large arsenal (used before as storage for military supplies), with the objective to transform it into a place of service, to develop the Christian testimony and mission. Following are several explications that present the process of these last few years and our new challenges.

A Few Historical Points

The church L'Eglise Evangélique Mennonite of Tavannes (EEMT) was implanted in 1989 under the guidance of the Swiss Mennonite Conference. The village Tavannes is placed in the heart of Jura Bernois, the French speaking part of the Canton Bern. This region has been connected to Switzerland since 1815, before it was a part of the Bale Evêché, a region that had welcomed many persecuted Anabaptists from outside of the Swiss territories during the 17th century. The Anabaptists received the authorization to live on different mountain chains, while guarding their German language by installing their own schools. Since the middle of the 20th century, the Mennonites have progressively moved into the French speaking villages in the valleys.

The Development of the Church in Tavannes

At the moment of the church's constitution in 1989, 40 adults and their children from the Mennonite Assembly from the region of Moron and Sonnenberg rejoined the new church in Tavannes, with the particularity of developing a French Mennonite presence. In 1993, the location was expanded to increase its ability to welcome 80 to 200 new places. This location, in its turn, became too restricting in size, so beginnings in 2006 new solutions were searched for. Temporary solutions have been found for the children's church by the use of classrooms in a local school, while bigger church life events are held in a large hall owned by the town. These last few years, the community has continued growing through the arrival of new believers and the attendance of Middle Eastern refugees. It is because of this that Arabic translation has been organized during the church service since 2013.

The Purchase and the Transformation of a Military Building

The initial plan aimed to add a new extension to the current building, but its close proximity to a farming zone required the abandonment of this possibility. Over the duration of the search, EEMT signaled its interest in buying one of the buildings put up for sale by the Swiss Army in 2006. In order to find a solution that kept all of the buildings on the military site together, the process to reach a lower purchase price was very long. After the first vote, where the population voted on the idea in 2013, and the second vote on the finances in 2015, a common solution was found. On June 9, 2016, EEMT became the owner of this huge building built in 1895. The purchase price was raised to 530,000.00 CHF (536,000.00 USD).

Since autumn 2013 a building commission, with the help of an architect, has worked on the plan to transform this building. The plans were deposited last September to receive the authorization to begin construction. In the case where there are no oppositions to the plan, we hope to receive permission to begin construction before the end of 2016. As of now, the beginnings of the largest renovations are planned for spring 2017. There will be the possibility for volunteers to participate in the construction along with different companies. Our estimated duration of this transformation is set

for about 2 years. During this period, EEMT has a project to hire a member from the church as a foreman to supervise the work with the volunteers and construction companies.

The total amount of this transformation including a new roof, floor insulation, walls, new windows, complete interior amenities, with electricity and heating adds up to 3,799,200.00 CHF (3,911,900.00 USD). This does not include: the renovation of a large part of the ground level and exterior amenities, which will follow in a subsequent stage. For the finances, we appeal to the members and friends of the church, as well as donors who have a heart for this project. In 2013, using the first phase of donations we financed the purchase of the building and we are now gathering the necessary resources for the building's transformation.

Information Concerning the New Building

It is situated in the village Tavannes, next to the principal road that runs through the village. It has three levels that will become the following:

- Ground Level: the main entrance and several other spaces will be put in place. Already at the location is ONG, an organization that gathers cabinets and other dental and medical equipment to send to Western Africa; another space is already planned for developing social work with disadvantaged people in the region, a domain where several members of EEMT are already active.
- The First Floor: half of this floor will offer 4 large rooms for the children's church; the other half will become offices and administration for EEMT, while the resting spaces will be rented by ONG
- The Second Floor: the large hall offers about 400 places, with a big entry for welcoming; a multipurpose room offers 150 places for community children programs or weekly activities.

Illustrations for the building can be found on this site: <http://www.eemt.ch/arsenal/>

Contact Address and Bank Account Number

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For all questions and further information, we rest at your disposition.
We thank you for your interest and we count on God's favor for the realization of this project.

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