The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?“ Psalm 27:1
Dear Reader,

Faith, hope and love are the three basic virtues of Christian faith. This sounds so obviously implicit, but within the context of a crisis it becomes revolutionary. The Palestinian people have been suffering under the Israeli occupation for decades. Much injustice has happened on both sides. There is hardly any centre of conflict that has kept the world so much in suspense since World War II. Not even the most powerful people on Earth have been able to find an acceptable solution for all sides. It seems the situation could not be any more hopeless. But precisely in this situation, 15 Christian Palestinians raise their voices and call to their brothers and sisters to have faith, hope and love – yes, to even love those who they see responsible for their own plight. This is more than remarkable.

For this reason, we have focused this edition on the Kairos Palestine Document. In Germany, the Paper is still a source of controversial debate. Presumably, this can be no different in view of our past. But we hope that we can make a construction contribution to the discussion in this edition.

Of course you will also find lots of news about Schneller work in this edition, including very valuable books from the library of the Syrian Orphanage which have recently come to light (p 18/19). And we again take up the topic of Peace Education at the Schneller schools (p 20 and 24/25). We are grateful for the support you have shown to us and the schools in their work with children.

Finally you will also learn that Rev Andreas Maurer will be taking up a new post in November and will be leaving the Schneller work. We regret this very much. However, he is still with us and we will therefore take proper leave from him in our next edition.

Many greetings from the editors.

Yours,

Katja Dorothea Buck
(Editor in charge)
Some words of the Bible can be taken literally. Then they show their own truth. Pastor at the Nicolai Church in Leipzig, Christian Führer, refers to the „No violence!” slogan used by the Monday demonstrations as a short resume of the Sermon on the Mount. The origin of this statement is a verse from Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount which breathes the essence of this spirit: „Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.” The peaceful revolution of 1989 showed that non-violent resistance can reach its goal.

In May 2009, we were a small delegation of Evangelistic bishops of both genders who had just attended the celebrations on the 50th anniversary of the Palestinian Lutheran Church as an independent church. We were sitting in Ramallah together with the Minister-President of Palestine Dr Salaam Fayyad. We wanted to know what possibilities he saw for a way towards peace and togetherness for Israelis and Palestinians. He replied it was a matter of mutual recognition, of the right of Israelis and Palestinians to live within safe, recognised borders and to have trust in one another. In addition, the role of Christians, who are a small minority, was also very important. Our interest in this question was understandably great. What contribution could Christians make? Their main contribution was to constantly keep non-violence in mind in finding the solution to the ongoing conflicts, said Fayyad. As a Muslim, he understood the political ethics which Christians held that non-violence has a very high priority in resolving conflicts. In the teachings of Jesus, he was impressed that Jesus pursued his path with great clarity and determination but always remained non-violent. Indeed, did not Jesus say that non-violence was praised in order to reach political goals? Here, Salaam Fayyad was presumably referring to Jesus’ Beatitude: „Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth [the land].”

In December 2009, leading Palestinian Christian theologians appealed to the international community, the churches of the world, the leaders of the Palestinian people and the Israelis for help in seeking ways out of the spiral of violence. The Kairos Palestine Document is regarded as a cry of hope in hopeless times. The present situation of Palestinians of both genders in Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is described in unsparing and realistic terms. The root of the whole problem appears to be the occupation of Palestinian territories by Israel. This document seeks for paths to the future from the centre of Christian faith in a sheer hopeless situation. It refers back to Jesus’ commandment to love your enemy, a commandment that „must be observed at all costs”. For this reason, any resistance which is the only way out for Palestinians in view of Israeli violence, can only be non-violent. Literally this means, „Seeing the image of God in the face of the enemy means taking up positions in the light of this vision of active resistance to stop the injustice and oblige the perpetrator to end his aggression and thus achieve the desired goal, which is getting back the land, freedom, dignity and independence.”

This self-imposed commitment to non-violence is a unique step towards the liberation of a country from the cycle of violence which has prevailed in the region for thousands of years. The hope remains that world-wide Christianity, and in particular the State of Israel, realises there is an opportunity to resolve the current conflict by rediscovering the message of Jesus.

Dr Hans-Jürgen Abromeit is Bishop of the Pomeranian Evangelical Church and President of the Jerusalem Society.
FROM THE HEART OF SUFFERING
The creation of and response to the Kairos Palestine Document

Actually, it is a marvel that the Kairos Palestine Document was produced at all. Those who are familiar with the church landscape in the Middle East know how much value each denomination places on its identity. Despite all this, all the churches are backing the Kairos Palestine Document. It is even received with enthusiasm from Muslims.

J ust remember the example of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. Five denominations share the same church space and a totally banal incident can quickly escalate into a violent discussion. The Kairos Document is anything else than banal. It is a Christian reply to the Israeli occupation. On 11 December 2009, 15 Palestinian Christians of both genders presented the text to the public under the title “A word of faith, hope and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering”. Kairos Palestine, as the document is known as in short, was produced at a time which is marked by resignation and hopelessness in Palestinian society. All attempts at reaching peace had failed. International peace negotiations had come to nothing, the second Intifada had ended in bloody disaster, nothing could stop the building of the separation fence and the Palestinian society become increasingly split into supporters and opponents of Fatah and Hamas. The document came to be because we could no longer stand the silence, say those who helped to draft the text.

In the document, the authors express their readiness to seek reconciliation. They speak in favour of a theologically founded understanding of love which rejects all forms of revenge and vengeance. This makes Kairos Palestine unique. It radically puts into question the national consensus that the use of weapons and violence is a legitimate means against Israel. Such a statement would have been dangerous even during the second Intifada and would have given rise to the suspicion of collaboration with the enemy.

The authors belong to various denominations (Orthodox, Oriental, Catholic, Lutheran and Baptist). The fact that all Patriarchs and church leaders in Jerusalem signed a statement only a few days after publishing the document can be regarded as a masterpiece of church diplomacy. In any case, it shows how urgent the desire is within the ranks of Christian Palestinians to end the state of occupation peacefully.

Kairos Palestine has a long prehistory. The initiative for the Palestinian think tank occurred at the conference of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Amman in 2007. After that, 15 people of various denominations, young and old, women and men, theologians and laypersons began to meet at irregular intervals in Bethlehem to think over the question of what reply Christians could give to the occupation situation. “We wanted to create something that is directed at all Palestinians,” says Nidal Abu Zuluf about the Joint Advocacy Initiative for Palestine. There were still non-violent initiatives during the first Intifada. But the second Intifada was dominated by violence and people had become more and more depressed and hopeless, the worse the situation had developed. “We wanted to wake up the world and appeal to all churches: please revise your theology,” says Abu Zuluf. “As Palestinian Christians we had often experienced that theology had been misused to justify the Israeli occupation.”

The incredibly tedious editorial process lasted almost two years and many of the group members admit that discussions were tiring and sometimes even boring. For non-theologians it must have been difficult at times to follow the theological hair-splitting which the church people discussed. However, the many discussions were necessary on the path to reaching consensus. The World Council of Churches (WRC), which observed the work of the editorial team with attentive interest, finally decided on the date for publication.

It was too early for some in the group. “Actually we were not ready to go public,” says liberation theologian Naim Ateek. “For example, we had not yet covered the question of gender perspectives,” says Ateek. The fact that the women’s role was not addressed in such an important document was a major omission. “It was precisely the women in the group who introduced very important points during the creation of the document.”

The fact the a text was finally produced which everyone could append his signature to is the merit of Michel Sabbah, former Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem. As pensioner he had the time to compile the thoughts expressed by the group. And the unspoken hierarchy within the Palestinian
ecumenical movement apparently made it possible for all church leaders to participate in the statement. One member of the team of authors was Theodosius Attallah Hanna, Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem. He was the first to sign the statement. As representative of the church with the most members, no other church leader could actually ignore his word.

Churches from all over the world responded immediately to the document. Words of encouragement came from South Africa and drew parallels between the occupation and apartheid. Dalits in India responded, churches in Latin America, the Netherlands, Norway, Canada, Sweden, France – there was no end to the stream of replies. Meanwhile, the document has been translated into 14 languages, but not into Hebrew yet.

In Germany, response to Kairos Palestine was and remains a struggle. Or, to put it another way, the response is not easy. There was strong criticism and disapproval from the ranks of the German-Israeli Society and Christian-Jewish Co-operation: the document dramatised the situation in Palestine, downplayed the terror caused by Hamas and spoke out against Israel’s right of existence. Criticism was levelled against imprecisely formulated passages such as “We respect and have a high esteem for all those who have given their life for our nation.” Does this also refer to the suicide bombers who are regarded as martyrs by the Palestinian people? There was also refusal to accept the argumentation that the responsibility for Palestinian suffering was alone attributable to the Israeli occupation forces. In the end, the call to consider a boycott of Israeli goods as a possible show of non-violent resistance triggered a storm of protest. There were feelings that it smacked of the terrible Nazi slogan “Don’t buy from the Jews!” At times it appeared the discussion purely centred around the boycott issue. The extent to which some church sectors are struggling with the text is demonstrated by the fact that very little time was devoted to Kairos Palestine in the panel discussions at the Kirchentag (Church Congress) in Dresden.

In Palestine itself, the document was received with wholehearted enthusiasm. Shortly after publication, several thousand Palestinians of both genders signed. "Kairos Palestine speaks about my life as a Christian woman in Palestine," says Yasmine Khoury, a young Syrian-Orthodox Christian living in Bethlehem. At last there was some movement in the society. "I am convinced that something will change because of the document," she says.

After the text was published, it quickly found ecumenical partners in Norway and the Netherlands who provided funds to set up a Kairos co-ordination office. Since then, this is where all the threads come together. The contents of the document are presented in schools and in Youth and Gender Work. One work group has produced materials for religious classes at Christian schools. The Ecumenical Committee for Religious Education has already decided to teach the basic ideas of Kairos – faith, hope and love – in all ninth and tenth grades in Christian schools in Palestine. "We want to try to also have the contents of Kairos Palestine included in the national curriculum and then taught at all Palestinian schools," says Nora Carmi, a sociologist who is working voluntarily for Kairos Palestine.

Even if Christians are only a very small minority of Palestinian society at not even two per cent, it is by no means absurd to hope that Kairos Palestine will also find support from the Muslim majority. The document was presented to the Palestinian Authority during talks at the beginning of the year. "At Christmas time last year, the Palestinian Prime Minister Dr Salam Fayyad spoke enthusiastically about Kairos at a major event in Beit Sahour attended by several thousand people," recounts Rifat Kassis, director of the Kairos office. "He said this was not a purely Christian document but one that spoke for all Palestinians." Meanwhile, there are actually Muslim groups which are examining the document and working on their own Kairos text.
“POWER LIES IN THE GRASS ROOTS“
Parallels and differences with apartheid in South Africa

The Kairos Palestine Document is constantly compared with the call of South African Christians. In 1985, they called for a boycott on goods from South Africa. In the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, the “church’s grass roots achieved a change in mindset of the church leaderships,” says Heidelberg theologian Ulrich Duchrow, who was an active member of the anti-apartheid movement in the 1970s and 1980s.

When was the first time you heard about the comparison between South Africa and Israel?
There was a Muslim liberation theologian from South Africa who said that, in both cases, a nation was supplying religious arguments for its domination over another people and, on this foundation, it believed it was in the right to refuse to grant human and civil rights to members of the other nation.

What do you think about the Israel-South Africa comparison?
You will have to ask the people in South Africa. The analogies seem clear to them. In a reply letter to the Kairos Palestine Document, they wrote in April this year that the occupation of Palestine was a fundamental evil and as such, it was a question of faith whether to resist against it. The South Africans consider Zionism as racist and regard Israel as an apartheid state. They consider the theological justification of Israeli occupation by Zionism as a heresy. Christian churches which support this must ask themselves why they have positioned themselves on the side of the occupiers.

Can you explain the accusation of heresy in more detail?
Religious justification of the occupation of the Palestinian territories by Zionism is contrary to all statements about a just and merciful God in the Hebrew Bible.

How did official church representatives in Germany react to the cry for help from South Africa?
The Kairos-South Africa Document was first published in 1985. The disputes in Germany regarding position towards apartheid were already in full swing. Many church representatives in Germany were highly critical of the anti-apartheid movement for a long time. When the WCC revealed the anti-racism programme at its general assembly in Uppsala in 1968, however, there was strong opposition from the German churches against it and particularly against the special fund for humanitarian support to the liberation movements recognised by the UN. They said it would be supporting terrorism. Personally, I was called a terrorist sympathiser in the 1970s and 1980s. At that time, Nelson Mandela was regarded by many church representatives as a top terrorist.

Were there theological discussions about the South Africa document?
When it was published in 1985, hardly any note was taken of it. Accordingly, there were no major conflicts. However, there had already been a lot of discussions about apartheid at a much earlier date. For example, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) had proclaimed the Status Confessions at its general assembly in Dar-es-Salaam in 1977. This means that the position towards apartheid had become an issue of faith. If churches really wanted to be church, they had to reject apartheid. In 1982, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) followed suit and declared apartheid to be equal with a heresy. In Germany in the same year, there was a heated debate between church representatives and ecumenical grass roots groups.

Ultimately Germany supported a broadly based boycott of South African goods. How was this possible?
Evangelical gender work played an important role here. South African women had turned to German women and asked them to boycott products from South Africa. Gender work brought politics to the grass roots with the shopping basket. It was not only a matter of not buying fruit from South Africa. Finance institutes, such as the Deutsche Bank which supported the apartheid regime, were also boycotted. This led to turbulent discussions within the church. Finally, it was the church grass roots which finally forced church leadership to change its mind.

How is it that, if many people can be mobilised in the case of South Africa, the Kairos Palestine Document has not yet arrived at the church grass roots?
So far no grass roots organisation of any name, like the Evangelical Gender Work then, has been found to support the topics in the Kairos Palestine Document. There are individual local initiatives. But to really get things moving, it needs a critical mass and this could be gender or youth work, for example. By the way, the German Catholic Youth Association (BDKJ) managed to push through a ban on the sale of Coca Cola products within its own organisation and at sales outlets in the Central Committee at the Catholic Day conference in 2008. That was their answer to a call for help from Columbia where eight trade unionists were killed for criticising the actions of the Coca Cola company. So things like this do have an effect.

In Germany, many people criticise the call to boycott Israeli goods in the Kairos Palestine Document. This is perfectly understandable in view of German history. What do you think about this?
It is not a matter of boycotting Israel but of boycotting Israeli goods and services originating from the occupied territories. Even the European Union (EU) makes a distinction between products coming...
from Israel and those imported from the occupied territories. For the latter there are no free trade regulations in fact. They are subject to customs duties. The Neoliberal EU is much further advanced than our churches in this matter. Otherwise, Jesus himself even resisted using the tool of denial. Boycott is something normal, even something obvious when you no longer want to support the structures of injustice.

What would you advise so that Kairos Palestine can achieve greater attention in Germany?

Besides a broad-based grass roots organisation that makes the concerns into their own, it also needs a new kind of argument. The division into “pro-Palestine or pro-Israel” must end and this must change into an advocacy for both peoples. Israel is destroying its own future with this policy. So much violence will not remain without effect on its own society. Israel only has a future when it learns to live together with the Palestinians. We in Germany must learn to argue for both peoples at the same time, just as many Jews of both genders are doing inside and outside Israel.

The questions were put by Katja Dorothea Buck.

The Council of Christian Churches in Germany (ACK) in Baden-Württemberg has published a detailed working aid on Kairos Palestine. It contains the entire document translated into German.

If can be ordered from ACK Baden-Württemberg for 2 Euros:

Tel.: +49 711-243114
or Email: ackbw@t-online.de

KAIROS PALESTINE: FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE

High Time for Peace

The theological discussion around the Kairos Palestine Document

Kairos Palestine is causing controversial discussions among German church circles and theologians. The central issue of the debate revolves around the significance for us Christians that the Old Testament refers to Israel as God’s chosen people.

First and foremost, the following applies: cries for help must be heard! The Palestinian “Cry of hope in the absence of all hope” originates from the experience of daily suffering, daily humiliation and deprivation of rights. This cry should not be allowed to go unheard. It cannot be any different: Christian women and men together with their sisters and brothers in Palestine long for a time in which hate, perversion of justice and a situation without peace will belong to the past, and they share with them the trust in the effective strength of “faith, hope and love”.

It is correct that sisters and brothers in faith should be encouraged and allowed to express a critical word. Hearing a cry for help is one thing, but analysing and interpreting reality is another – on this point the Palestinian Paper is one-sided and monocausal. Condemning the (Israeli) occupation is one thing, reducing the reason for the entire conflict to the occupation (1.4) is another. No mention is made of the ideology of Hamas, nor is any mention given of the rockets fired on Sderot and Ashkelon or even the long series of suicide bombings in previous years. There is absolutely no word said about the right to exist of the State of Israel; on the contrary, the existence of the State of Israel from its foundation is presented generally under the label of an “injustice” (2.3.2) and is even referred to as a catastrophe: “Nakba” (3.3.3).

Remembering bad times

The paper places Zionism close to racism – in the undefined frankness of individual central formulations – and also likens the State of Israel to an apartheid state akin to South Africa. I hold both associations for improper and politically flawed. The call for economic sanctions and a boycott is unthinkable for many Germans as it is a reminder of the National Socialist era.

The reply to the sisters and brothers in Palestinian congregations must be twofold: it draws on being part of the one body of Jesus Christ and it is obligated with an unrenounceable connection with the Jewish people and its history of faith. The theological accents formulated in the Kairos Document contradict the insights gained from Christian-Jewish dialogue: the traditional liberation theology and disinheritance position (the Church disperses Israel as God’s People!) should be relegated to the past. My theological criticism of the Kairos Document is as follows: The key hermeneutic passage of Hebrews 1:1-2 (Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds.) proves a Christian Palestinian faith of fulfilment which renders a separate Jewish history of faith related
to the present impossible. The sovereignty of interpretation over the Revelation story is a Christian one, i.e. a Christian-Palestinian one. The election of the First Nation of Israel is ignored in favour of a “universal mission for the world” which is the task of the patriarchs, the prophets and the apostles are familiar (2.3.1). The fundamental significance of the country of Israel fades away in blurred terms referring to the “earth” or the “universality” of the country: “We believe that our country has a universal mission. In this universality, the meaning of the promises, of the land, of the election, of the people of God open up to include all of humanity, starting from all the peoples of this land.” (2.3)

A clear yes for Israel
I am convinced that the Palestinian voice could really gain attention and acceptance if it formulated a clear “yes” to the theological significance of the real Israel. In a new version of Hebrews 1:1-2 I found the following statement – seemingly tailor-made to the sentences in the Kairos Document: “God does not become larger in the present if his actions are made smaller in the past; his trust in “us” does not become more credible if his trust in the Jewish People is dismissed as transient.”

What is really encouraging in the Kairos Document is the unquestionable option in favour of a “culture of life” against all the excesses of radical violence. This is not only courageous, it is prophetic. The fact that the country around which the dispute has revolved for so long is further than the horizon of the narrow-minded – this is what the voice from the Palestinian churches is filled with: “God has put us here as two peoples, and God gives us the capacity, if we have the will, to live together and establish the land in justice and peace, making it in reality God’s land.” (2.3.1).

My home church, the Protestant Church in Baden, answered the Christians in Palestine and closed with the words:

“Dear Sisters and Brothers,

It is time for peace in Israel and Palestine. It is time for a “No” without any “Yes” to all the acts of violence and perversions of justice on all sides of the conflict. It is time for Israeli as well as Palestinian self-criticism. It is time to discover in the opposite party the partner who feels genuinely threatened, frightened and therefore overreacts. It is time to reach out a hand to the person “on the other side” before it is too late – it is time to grasp the “Kairos” and time to take leave of evil.

In this way, we, as companions in faith, hope and love, wish to support you, dear sisters and brothers, on the path to a “Holy Land” truly renewed in God’s spirit, in which peace and justice reigns.”

Dr Klaus Müller is parish priest in Heidelberg, Extraordinary Professor for Practical Theology at the University of Heidelberg and delegate of the Protestant Church of Baden for Christian-Jewish dialogue.
IN A WALLED-IN CAGE

How Israelis experience the occupation and Germans just delude themselves

At a conference on the Kairos Palestine Document at the Evangelical Academy in Bad Boll last May, Iris Hefets spoke about the consequences which occupation has on the everyday life of people in Israel. We report an extract from her speech which also appeared unabridged in Der Semit – Unabhängige jüdische Zeitschrift (The Semite – independent Jewish magazine).

For many Germans, Israel is a symbol of the incomplete genocide against the Jews, the place where the almost extinguished Jewish species live in a reservation. For this reason, they must be treated with silk gloves and its “right of existence” must be specially defended. This policy is backed by cliched set phrases that harbour no discussion. A person is quickly pigeonholed as an opponent or a proponent of Israel’s right of existence. On this issue, it is difficult to be a simple human rights activist.

In Germany, Israel’s right of existence is “state policy” and so the matter is closed. The question of what this existence should be like and why talk only revolves around Israel’s right of existence is pushed into the background. Ultimately, the fear of anti-Semitism serves as justification to prevent an open discussion on Israeli policy. If the necessary caution is relaxed, others - yes, it is always the others - may express antisemitic statements. And we all know where that could lead to, so hands off!

On the other hand, Israelis in Israel are not particularly happy about living in their walled-in cage. In any case, many of them find it difficult to cope without recourse to addictive substances. Those who do not belong to the regular 65,000 young Israelis who spend time in India on a three-month visa (visas with a longer term are no longer issued by the Israeli authorities), must get by on antidepressants and tranquillisers. Soldiers with post-traumatic symptoms can obtain marijuana on prescription in Israel. Of course, this is available without prescription as long as a shortage does not force consumers into crises, as happened recently when there were supply difficulties from Sinai. The Israeli parliament recently discussed the broadcasting of a TV series. Every evening, it showed four young men whose main activity consisted of smoking pot. They did this under the slogan “To see life through rose-coloured spectacles, you must have red eyes”.

Israel – a dangerous place

The Zionist promise of creating a safe homeland for the Jews has apparently failed. At the moment, there is no other place in the world that is as dangerous for the Jews as Israel. 60 per cent of Jews in the world, among which are one million Israeli citizens, have decided accordingly and live elsewhere, in the hope of not having to return to Israel as their potential point of refuge.

However, the political class in Germany hides behind empty words and blocks EU policy, whereas many German citizens here feel that something bad is happening in Palestine under the responsibility of Israel and this is actively supported by the German government. But they know they must be careful when talking about it and that different rules apply when it comes to Israel. German middle-class and upper-class citizens are delighted if their children need not go to the army, but they support Israelis who service in the army. “Never again war” is probably not meant for Israeli-Jewish mothers, let alone Palestinian mothers.

But hardly any mention is made of the main victims of this situation, the Palestinians. They are mainly depicted as active in the German media, if at all. They are either shooting or not shooting, accepting Israeli offers or turning them down. As a consequence, the Jews in Israel are in a defensive position. There are even projects supported by Germany to teach the Palestinians about the history of the German genocide against the Jews so that the Palestinians can understand the Jews in Israel better. This means the victim’s victim is supposed to understand his aggressor because the aggressor’s aggressor maintains this as a kind of national policy.

Iris Hefets left her homeland of Israel nine years ago for political reasons. Today she lives in Berlin and is an active member of the group “Critical Jews and Israelis”.

Photo: www.ryanrodrickbeiler.com
Sometimes life produces a few really good stories even in notoriously unsettled places like the Middle East. A German Jew who was an Israeli soldier and had just escaped from the Shoah, found some old German books from a former German institution in Jerusalem, the Syrian Orphanage. Only later did it come to light that the books included a first edition of the collected works by Goethe. Now Ury Eppstein wants to donate this literary treasure to the Theodor Schneller School (TSS) in Amman. For the 86 year old this would be his first journey to an Arabian country.

When the first Israeli army unit moved into the confiscated building of the Syrian Orphanage in 1948, the historical library belonging to the Schneller family was still there. It was obvious that the Israeli soldiers had other priorities only three years after the Shoah than to look after German books. While the majority of the books were lost in the chaos of those weeks of war, one of these soldiers decided to take at least the complete works of Goethe and Schiller in safe keeping. Ury Eppstein, born in Saarbrücken in 1925, took the books with him – with the intention of returning them one day to the heirs of their rightful owner.

The Goethe works proved to be a true sensation. It was the complete 60 volume “last authorised version” published by Cotta in 1827 that had even been edited by Goethe himself. This, as well as Schiller’s “collected works” from 1835, will be handed over to the Theodor Schneller School in Amman during an official act in October.

But before the books finally left Jerusalem, a good-bye event was organised in the Church of the Redeemer with a public reading called a “Farewell for Goethe”. Two well-known journalists from radio and print media, Gil Yaron, Middle East correspondent and author, and Sebastian Engelbrecht from ARD Radio Tel Aviv, read their favourite passages from the historic books by Goethe and Schiller. Yaron read from the more well-known monologues from “Faust” and a fine selection of poems. Sebastian Engelbrecht took the many people in the audience on a journey to the world of the “Young Werther”.

Ury Eppstein, the former finder and now retired musicologist, related in moving words how he had rescued the books in unsettled days. Gil Gordon, historian and architect and for many years a connoisseur of Syrian Orphanage history, finally pursued the question how two so valuable editions had landed in the library of an orphanage. Apparently they originated from the inheritance of Freiherr von Mönnich who – childless and seriously ill – had bequeathed his entire estate to the Schneller institution.

In a few weeks’ time, the books will start on their second and last stage of their journey. Parish members of the Church of the Redeemer will take them across the border to Jordan and to the Theodor Schneller School. Ury Eppstein would love to hand over the books in Amman himself. For the 86 year old this would be his first journey to an Arabian country. But he will make the final decision to undertake such a journey dependent on the security situation at the beginning of October.

How can such a valuable literary treasure be used to any practical extent in an institution whose priority is to train young people to become fitters, carpenters and car mechanics? The TSS will loan the books to the German-Jordanian University (GJU) where they will be stored properly and will render service to science. In exchange, the GJU will provide a German teacher to the Schneller school. The children at the TSS, some of whom are grandchildren of Palestinian refugees from 1948, will then have the chance to learn German.

Dr Uwe Gräbe, Provost at the Church of the Redeemer in Jerusalem
SCHOOLCHILDREN DEMAND: NO VIOLENCE AT SCHOOLS

Amman (TSS). At the end of May, 80 schoolchildren of both genders from the whole of Amman met at the Theodor-Schneller School (TSS) to spend a whole day debating the motion: “No violence! Let’s enter into dialogue!” The young people aged from twelve to 16 years old demanded an education without violence in a final declaration. To achieve this, democratic structures would have to be ensured at schools, freedom of expression in the classroom, equality between girls and boys and for members of minorities. Moreover, the pupils should be allowed to be politically active and to enter into a social network. In this way, school could become a place to learn peace education, it says in the final document that will now be printed and distributed to the Ministry of Education, members of parliament and other schools.

Musa Al-Munaizel, education adviser to the Schneller schools, together with Dr Khaleda Massarwa and pupils of the TSS had spent six month preparing this day and had invited a number of speakers. Among them were the President of the Jordanian Parliament and a number of MPs who faced questions put to them by the young people. At the end, the young people put up drawings and paintings on several walls inside and outside the building to demonstrate what peace in school and peace in society meant to them. “This even must have been unique in Jordan.”

FOCUS ON CAR MECHANIC TRAINING

Amman (TSS/EVS). At the end of May, trainers from the Vocational Education Centre Waiblingen (BBW) met with co-workers from the car mechanic training department of the Theodor Schneller School (TSS) and representatives from industry and the Ministry of Labour to discuss about a contemporary, modern training methods for car mechanics at the TSS.

“It is urgently necessary for the TSS to break new ground quickly so that apprentices can be qualified to stay competitive on the market any more.”

The workshop took place during an evaluation project which the German Embassy in Amman initiated and which was financed by the Evangelical Development Service with funds from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development. Before the workshop took place, Hekmann set up and carried out the project at the TSS. “Today, 30 to 50 per cent of the manufacturing costs for a modern car are taken up by electronics,” says Hekmann. And this does not even take the new hybrid technology into consideration. “This alone makes it clear that the previous occupation as car mechanic has no chance on the market any more.”

The review revealed that there was an urgent need to modernise car mechanic training. It is envisaged to introduce a third training year during which apprentices can be trained to become mechatronics. Even the new term “mechatronics” shows how the focus in the automotive industry has shifted from mechanics to electronics. The previous profession of car mechanic no longer paves the way ahead. “It is urgently necessary for the TSS to break new ground quickly so that apprentices can be qualified to stay competitive on the labour market,” says Hekmann.

COFFEE, SWEETMEATS AND A LOT OF INFORMATION

Dresden (EVS). At the beginning of June, the Evangelical Association for the Schneller Schools (EVS) was present at the Kirchentag (Church Congress) in Dresden with a booth. Many visitors came to obtain information about the work of the Schneller schools and the EVS. Many used the opportunity with oriental coffee and sweetmeats to exchange information about the Middle East or simply to rest from the bustle of the event. Among the celebrities who visited the booth was Dr Volker Jung, church leader of the Protestant Church in Hesse and Nassau, who is also member of the Board of Trustees of the Schneller Association.

EVS INVITES MEMBERS TO TÜBINGEN

Stuttgart (EVS). The Evangelical Association for the Schneller Schools (EVS) is inviting its members to the annual general
meeting that will take place in Tübingen on 23 October 2011. All members and friends of Schneller work are heartily welcome.

The worship service will start in Stiftskirche (sermon by Mitri Raheb) at 9.30. After the service, members will deal with the business of the annual general meeting at the “Lamm” parish hall on the Marktplatz (market square) in Tübingen. In the afternoon as always, there will be a mixed programme focused on the Schneller schools. The EVS was able to win over Mitri Raheb, the Evangelical-Lutheran pastor from Bethlehem. In the afternoon, he will give a speech about his two grandfathers who were once pupils at the Syrian Orphanage.

In addition, the EVS will take leave of their long-standing Managing Director, Rev Andreas Maurer, on this day. In November, he will be taking up a post at the Paulinenpflege (care of the handicapped) in Winnenden. We will bid farewell to Rev Andreas Maurer in our next edition of this magazine.

Wrong Caption
Stuttgart (EVS). In the March edition of the Schneller Magazine, we reported about Elias Nasr al-Haddad at the Syrian Orphanage in Jerusalem and his Arabic translation of Lessing’s “Nathan der Weise” (Nathan the Wise). In the photo printed we unfortunately mixed up the names of the people in the caption. Erika Horn was kind enough to inform us of this. Mrs Horn writes that the person designated by the editors as Elias Nasr al-Haddad in the centre of the left-hand photo is her grandfather Chalil Haddad (1865-1949) who was head of the printing press at the Syrian Orphanage. “Standing behind him on the right is my mother Lydia Weidemann.” Next to her are her aunts and an uncle.

This is not the first time that Erika Horn’s grandfather was mixed up with Elias Nasr al-Haddad. At the archives of the regional church (Landeskirchlicher Archiv) in Stuttgart where the photo comes from, it was previously assumed that this person on the photo was Elias Nasr al-Haddad. Unfortunately there has so far been no photo which clearly shows the senior teacher. The persons responsible in the archive would therefore be grateful if someone could be found to help them identifying people on various photos. The photos in question originate from the 1920s and 1930s. Contact: Dr Jakob Eisler, Tel. +49 711 2149-172.

EVS Mourns the Passing of Wolfgang Hinker

For five years, Rev Wolfgang Hinker was head of the Theodor Schneller School in Amman.

The Evangelical Association for the Schneller Schools (EVS) mourns the passing of Rev Wolfgang Hinker who died suddenly at the age of 81 on 18 July. From 1979 to 1984, Hinker was headmaster of the Theodor Schneller School (TSS) in Amman. After his retirement he maintained friendly relations with the Schneller schools.

Hinker understood his work in Amman as service to God. During his inaugural sermon on 7 October 1979, he spoke about Jesus’ words: Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me. “A shock always goes through me when I meet these words. It means nothing else than our conduct towards children reflects our conduct towards Jesus Christ. The way I am toward a child, so am I towards Jesus.” This is what Wolfgang Hinker said more than 30 years ago.

At the 150th anniversary of the Schneller schools last year, he said: “Life and work in and at the TSS in Amman gave me valuable insights in Arab-Christian and Arab-Muslim mentality, lifestyle and culture. I am still impressed how it was and is possible in the complex field of tension in the Middle East to persevere on fostering understanding between Christians and Muslims using the updated development in the work of Johann Ludwig Schneller and to convey to young people future perspectives through school and educational work and through vocational training.”

With the death of Wolfgang Hinker, we have lost a great friend and supporter. We will honour his memory.

Rev Klaus Schmid, Chairman of the EVS
GETTING RID OF THE CONCEPT OF REVENGE
What soldiers and armoured vehicles are doing on the grounds of the JLSS

It is always worthwhile to visit the website of the Johann Ludwig Schneller School. In preparing this edition of the Schneller Magazine at the end of June, I paid another visit to the JLSS (www.jlss.org) website. When I started reading the article entitled “Funfair and Field Day” under the news section for early summer, I could not believe my eyes. It talked about the presence of armoured carriers on the school grounds.

George Haddad, headmaster of the JLSS, reported in detail about the field day that takes place every year and to which the school had invited a unit from the Lebanese army. The soldiers and their officers had spared no efforts in demonstrating their skills to the school community. This was followed by photos of armoured vehicles on the school grounds and soldiers roping down from the church tower wielding machine guns. My first reaction was to shake my head in disbelief and this gave way more and more to total lack of understanding.

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Over the many years of co-operation, I got to know George Haddad as a very thoughtful person and so I immediately wrote him an email asking him to please, please explain what this was all about. How can such an event be equated with the concept of peace education? In Germany nobody would hit on the idea of inviting the Bundeswehr (German Army) to the grounds of a school, and definitely not to a Christian school. The reply from Khirbet Kanafar came immediately.

George Haddad asked me to look at things against the background of the situation in Lebanon. “Taking the law into one’s hands was still widespread in Lebanon until very recently,” he wrote. “The principle was an eye for an eye. Revenge was the order of the day. When your brother was killed, you had to kill his murderer. If you could not find him, you had to kill his cousin and so on and so forth.”

“It is sad,” George Haddad continued, “but such acts of retaliation still occur in Lebanon. Only last year, two policemen were killed in Baalbek and Majdel Anjar. They were on duty and had shot at criminals killing them. Later, their relatives then killed the policemen. In the past, revenge was the way people defended themselves in Lebanon. Revenge was everybody’s duty, then that of his immediate family and then the relatives and ultimately that of the religious or political grouping. Revenge played an enormous role in the civil war in Lebanon. Peace Education in Lebanon means teaching young people that they should not solve their problems with violence but that the state (police, army or justice system) should protect their rights when they are treated unjustly by anybody. Peace Education means getting rid of the concept of revenge,” wrote George Haddad and told about a case which happened at the field day in June.

“A scuffle took place during a friendly game between a team from Khirbet and the Schneller school. Immediately the two teams formed circles and tried to organise reinforcements from their families or clan by mobile phone. We ordered the two teams to immediately switch off their mobiles. We would take the matter over and find a solution to the problem that was acceptable for both sides.”

Teaching children that the state and its institutions are the only source of justice and law is an enormous step, wrote Haddad. “And this is exactly the context in which to understand our invitation for the Lebanese Army to visit our school grounds. The Lebanese Army has long been known as a very peace-loving army. We hope that it can maintain this image and that it becomes the only military authority in the country one day.” Here, Haddad is alluding to the Hizbollah whose increase in weapons is becoming an ever greater problem in Lebanon.

“It is sad,” continues Haddad, “But as long as the Lebanese people fails to accept the Lebanese army as the only military authority, wars and also civil wars will continue to break out quickly. War with Israel is possible at any time and if things continue the way they are now, we will have another civil war on our hands in less than ten years. The Lebanese army is our only hope. This is what George Haddad wrote as the background to an event that appears very strange in German eyes. “Don’t forget the luck you have in Europe of living in a constitutional state,” he wrote in conclusion. “That is something to take for granted.”

Katja Dorothea Buck
Tell us about your plans! We will be delighted to send you information about both or one of the schools. And if you send us a photo of your event, we will gladly publish it on our website.

The new school year has started and advent events will soon be planned in schools, associations and parishes. Would it not be a great idea to donate part of the revenue from your events to a good cause?

Christian and Muslim children live together at the two Schneller schools in Jordan and Lebanon. Many come from refugee families or other difficult backgrounds. The children learn protection in residential groups at the schools and can start a course of professional training at the workshops of the institutions. Do you want to help us in our efforts?

“Wichtel” (Christmas presents) are often made in schools and associations before Christmas. For example, you could decide to lower the top price of Wichtel presents and instead donate an amount to the Schneller schools. Or what about donating part of the revenues from a school play to the Schneller schools so that the pupils can demonstrate their solidarity with children in the Middle East? One class could bake some muffins and sell them in school. If you are holding a Christmas bazaar in your parish, you could rise the price for products by one Euro and indicate that this Euro will go to the Schneller schools. Or you could ask for a voluntary donation when selling food.

Does your association have an anniversary or any other celebration? Consider whether you want to include a charity donation. You can send out invitations under a slogan and ask members to participate or donate part of the revenues. If you want to cook Middle East cuisine, we will gladly supply you with recipes. Just contact us by email at: soldner@ems-online.org and we will send you original Middle East recipes.

Heide Soldner

Ex-Ambassadors Demand Recognition of Palestine

Berlin (SZ). Former German ambassadors have appealed to the German government to recognise the state of Palestine. “We urge you to say Yes to Palestine at the United Nations. It is a humanitarian imperative to end an unworthy policy of occupation,” it says in a letter by 32 former ambassadors and consul-generals to Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel and Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle. The former diplomats support this demand by quoting Israeli Minister President Benjamin Netanyahu who recently said in a speech before the US Congress that he had “closed the door on peace negotiations” and would promote the construction of settlements in the occupied territories.

“Nobody surpasses us in realising the historic responsibility of Germany to support the existence of Israel. It is all the more painful to us when the government of Israel disregards the main basic principles of the Western community of values,” it says in the diplomats’ letter.

Even in 2009, the former German diplomats had already demanded a tougher approach towards Israel in letters to Merkel and Westerwelle.

Human Rights for Israelis and Palestinians

Darmstadt (ekhn). In talks with young Germans, Israelis and Palestinians, the leader of the Protestant Church in Hesse and Nassau (EKHN) Dr Volker Jung, who is also Member of the Board of Trustees of the Schneller Association – Peace Education, emphasised the necessity of an independent Palestinian state. “We are convinced that the setup of a democratic, viable and independent state of Palestine is just as necessary as the support of a democratic, viable and independent state of Israel which is recognised by its neighbours.” The Evangelical Church is very much aware of its special historical responsibility towards Jews of both genders, explained regional church leader Jung. At the same time, he said that it was the duty of Christians to support peace and justice everywhere in the world. This would include the people in Palestine who need secure and good life prospects. “For us it is important that human rights are preserved and not violated under any circumstances,” says Jung, who encouraged the young Israelis and Palestinian to stand up for better relations between the people in their region. “We hope that your visit to us is a step on the path to more peace.” The aim of the meeting was to conduct “a little bit of peace work” and provide space for friendships to grow.
Two semesters studying theology in Beirut

Anna-Katharina Diehl from Hildesheim and Susanne Götz from Göppingen studied at the Near East School for Theology (NEST) in Beirut and, according to what they say, they learnt more than during three years at university in Germany.

Anna-Katharina Diehl observed during a visit to Israel “how tense the entire region was religiously and politically and how much propaganda was rife there.” She wanted to see “the other side” and decided to embark on the SiMO programme at NEST. The university is located in the mixed district of Ras Beirut which is also the home of the American University of Beirut, the famous Hamra shopping street and the German Speaking Lutheran Congregation. The two young women from Germany sat in the SiMO courses next to students from Denmark, Scotland, Switzerland, the USA, Germany and from Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Iraq. Getting to know the different backgrounds was a fantastic experience for them. They not only learnt a lot about Lebanon and the Eastern Churches but also about Christians from other countries and their own faiths.

The aim of the SiMO programme is to strengthen ecumenical and interreligious competence. Dr George Sabra teaches knowledge about Eastern Churches. To liven up the diversity and the rich traditions of Eastern churches, he accompanied the students on visits to bishops of various churches and to an Orthodox convent – a totally new world for the two students. Old convictions soon started to crumble. “In the past, I always had the feeling that we Protestants were modern,” says Susanne Götz who had previously studied at Tübingen. While learning about the Eastern churches, she noticed “how much spirituality there is in these churches and how important the plurality of denominations is for Christianity.”

The other focus in the SiMO programme was the Islam class held by Prof Colin Chapman. He explained Islam through the people and their everyday life and therefore built up a more likeable picture than the one the two German students were previously used to. The political discussions were also important for Anna-Katharina Diehl: “You can only understand the Muslim Brotherhood if you know the historical context and the economic dependencies.” To understand the complexity of Islam, much more knowledge must be provided in Germany, she finds. She received further insights into Islam in talks with two Muslim students. “They managed to change my rather sceptical attitude towards Islam,” says Anna-Katharina Diehl who had previously studied in Göttingen.

Dr George Sabra sees the SiMO programme confirmed due to the rising number of students wanting to register for the course: “This is a great success for us not only as an institution,” says the dean of NEST. “Also the fact that we can communicate with churches all over the world is an enormous opportunity.” We can now convey how Christians and Muslims coexist in the Middle East and explain the situation in the region. “And SiMO is a contribution towards making the voice of Christians in the Middle East heard,” says Sabra.

The two students felt the strong affinity with the students and lecturers at NEST as very enriching. “Our daily devotions also brought us closer together spiritually,” says Susanne Götz. It is hard to imagine such a closeness to lecturers in Germany. “We were like a family. We ate together and talked. I learnt more about openness and self-confidence here than in Germany in three years.” The nine months changed the young women. Both of them say they now see their faith and convictions in a new light and within a greater context.

Martina Waiblinger
Unusual perspectives

Even the cover picture says it all: the Dome of the Rock, the famous landmark of Jerusalem, is on the left edge of the picture and this produces an unusual perspective. There is one of these unusual perspectives on almost every page in this brand new travel guide entitled Palästina – Reisen zu den Menschen (Palestine – Journey to the People). “Come and see ...!” is the appeal on the cover. The publishers and authors are thus passing on the appeal of the Kairos Palestine Document from Palestinian Christians of both genders to the readers. The book is a reply to this appeal. Proceeds from the book will be donated to the peace promoting project Cinema Jenin.

Nine chapters describe everything regarding the history of the Middle East conflict, the conduct at the holy sites, and contains dozens of sightseeing and hiking trips on the West Bank and in East Jerusalem. Hundreds of addresses of Palestinian hotels, peace organisations and meeting places are contained in this long overdue publication. It also contains film tips, lists of public holidays or passages from the Bible and very practical tips, such as the following: How do you avoid the Israeli value added tax of 16 per cent when purchasing goods?

A human face

Anyone who wants to understand the current situation in the Arabian world cannot avoid dealing with the “Arabischer Frühling” (Arabian Spring). On the one hand, Jelloun manages in a number of essays to introduce readers to the motives of Arabian youth in their revolt and their struggle for dignity. On the other hand, he truly manages to understand the minds of despots such as Mubarak and Ben Ali and reveals the diseased thinking in these psychograms.

The author, born in Marocco, currently lives in Paris and Tangier. He provides a sober analysis of the situation in Tunisia, Egypt, Algeria, Yemen, Marocco and Libya and supplies an estimation whether the movement towards democratic change has a chance of success or failure in each country. He must be given great credit for the fact that he clearly identifies the victims of the revolution. With this tribute he gives a human face to the unrests. Nobody will forget the story of Mohammed Bouazizi, the vegetable merchant who set himself alight last December and triggered the Jasmin revolution in Tunisia. Jelloun has created a literary monument for him. The book is highly recommended not only for people who know the region.

Katja Dorothea Buck

BECOME A MEMBER OF THE EVS!

The “Evangelischer Verein für die Schneller-Schulen e.V.” (Evangelical Association for the Schneller Schools, EVS) supports and accompanies the work of the Johann Ludwig Schneller School in Lebanon and the Theodor Schneller School in Jordan. Its special task is to offer poor children school education and professional training at the Schneller Schools.

In its publications and events, the EVS provides information about churches and Christians in the Middle East. The Schneller Magazine is published four times a year and can be subscribed free of charge from the EMS. Speakers for lectures on topics featuring the work of the schools can be booked from the EVS Secretariat.

If you want to become a member of the EVS, we will be glad to send you an application for membership. The annual minimum fee for individuals is Euro 25 and Euro 50 for companies. By making a donation to the Schneller Schools, you are supporting the work of a recognised charitable welfare and social organisation.

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EVS Evangelical Association for the Schneller Schools

Obituaries

The following friends of the work of the Evangelical Association for the Schneller Schools (EVS) has departed from us:

Hans-Friedrich Hurtienne,
Schwedt/Oder

Hans Spohn, Mainhardt

Thank you!
We wish to acknowledge with many thanks the receipt of donations from unknown donors and those who do not wish to be named for private reasons as well as those whose names were unfortunately illegible.