

**ECUMENICAL THEOLOGICAL
RESEARCH FRATERNITY IN ISRAEL**
איחוד אקומני למחקר תיאולוגי בישראל

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DEAR FRIENDS!

The end of 1999 witnessed a wonderful Christmas celebration hosted by the *Fraternity* and the *Student Christian Forum*, held at **Canon William Broughton's** (Fraternity Vice President) residence in beautiful Abu Tor. The culinary delicacies of the season accompanied by much singing and warm fellowship were greatly appreciated by all.

Our lecture series on the theme "Christian and Jewish Responses to Ethical Challenges of Today" continued on November 18 by **Rabbi Prof Avraham Steinberg's** survey of the "Challenges of Medical Ethics for the Jewish Conscience of Today". He marked the differences between the religious and secular approaches in dealing with medical ethics: *While ethicists stress autonomy as the overriding principle leading to the decrease of shared social life, religious thinkers see that there are values that are more important than autonomy, precisely those values of society that are shared.*

Fr. Michael McGarry CSP was our guest of honor and lecturer on the evening of December 16. In view of his recent appointment as Rector of *Tantur Ecumenical Institute*, a welcoming reception, including a big cake, was held prior to the lecture. Fr. McGarry shared his expertise on "Heroes and Virtues: Reviving a Tradition for Pastoral Guidance among Young People". Having been involved previously as a student pastor at *Berkeley University*, his insights reflected a rare sense of practicality. He focused on the question of courage; how is it defined and what is its role in moral education.

Copies of Prof. Heyd and Fr. McGarry's lectures are available via our office for a charge of 20 NIS each.

Our catalogue project is advancing thanks to the diligent efforts of our Hebrew University intern **Hanh Do**. Her contribution to the Fraternity will be appreciated by many Christian/Jewish relations researchers in the future!

How can we thank **Laura Blakely** for her concerted devotion to the Ethiopian Orthodox Community of Jerusalem? Laura, a student of Religious Studies at the Hebrew University, with the desire to become practically acquainted with the Jerusalem Orthodox Christians gladly accepted our proposal to establish an English-language class for the Ethiopians in the Old City. May her efforts be rewarded generously as she returns to the States.

In response to our last newsletter we received contributions for the needs of the Orthodox communities. On behalf of our Christian brothers and sisters we thank each and every "cheerful giver", including: *Rev. Homann, Lubeck; Rev. Grusnick, Lubeck; Rev. Kluge, Berlin; Mrs. Kleine, Hamburg; Dr. Hunzinger, Hamburg; Rev. Stacker, Hamburg; Rev. White, Coventry; Rev. Sookhdeo, London; Rev. Phillips, Norwich.*

The Syrian Orthodox Grade School being built in Bethlehem is progressing. With funding provided by *The Barnabas Fund* and *The Coventry Community of the Cross of Nails*, donors include Christians from many denominations worldwide. We are blessed in this ecumenical endeavour serving, but also providing concrete assistance to the Body of Christ.

We received a delegation from the **NCLCI** (*National Christian Leadership Conference for Israel*), led by its Director **Dr. David Blewett**. Amongst their many meetings in Israel, was one with the Coptic Orthodox Archbishop, *His Grace* **Dr. Anba Abraham**. His knowledge of the ways of our Lord and his desire to bring Him glory touched each one of us. When Dr. Blewett asked him to mention the most pressing needs of the Coptic Community, *His Grace* responded by saying that he does not wish to speak selfishly, he would rather the topic of our discussion be the love of Jesus. Archbishop Abraham shares our vision for unity of Christians in the faith and for increased understanding between Jews and Christians in the Holy Land.

The year 2000 was opened with two historic events: the **Pan-Orthodox Synod** and a visit by *His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos* of All Armenians.

The first Pan-Orthodox Synod in Israel took place by the invitation of the **Greek Orthodox Patriarch** of Jerusalem on January 5, 2000, attended by 14 of the 15 heads of the world's Byzantine Orthodox Churches. *His All-Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople* pointed out at the Mayor's Banquet in their honor that the unity of the Church is of prime importance in the new Millennium. He also spoke of the close links to Israel and of the call on the Church leadership to give guidance regarding modern ethical challenges. The clergymen assembled in Bethlehem at midnight on the 6th of January for a united celebration of Christmas.

The Catholicos came for the Armenian Christmas, celebrated on January 18. On January 17, upon the arrival of *His Holiness* to the Holy Land, Jerusalem's Christian leaders gathered at Jaffa Gate for a solemn procession to St. James' Cathedral. There were many opportunities to share the common vision for Christian unity in the Holy Land, including at the Ecumenical Christmas buffet reception in Bethlehem, attended by most of the Christian leaders.

Several members of the Fraternity have been on the forefront of the media over the course of the new year, from *CNN* to *Popolitika* on Israeli TV. Amongst others, **Sr. Abraham** of the *Student Christian Forum* has appeared on television to speak on our opinion about the Christian spiritual significance of the year 2000. Her

response: *It is not for us to know the time.* **Sr. Katherine Wolff, NDS** witnessed from the Holy Sepulchre, to Vatican TV, of her life as a Christian within the Jewish tradition.

One of our members, **Sr. Gemma del Duca**, has been teaching Christianity at a Jerusalem school for Orthodox children. Although the response has generally been very positive, especially in light of Sr. Gemma's professional and competent manner, recently outside opponents encouraged students to boycott her classes. Only a handful of the students responded to their call.

A new Chair for New Testament studies has been appointed at the Department for Comparative Religion at the *Hebrew University*. This is a research project for the study of Christianity in the Holy Land since its inception. In this context much has been done over the past five years, under the leadership of **Prof. Guy Stroumsa** and **Dr. David Satran**. Most recently, **Frs. Driscoll and Rudin** established a scholarship for visiting scholars. **Prof. Nicholas Constatas** of *Harvard University*, of Greek-Orthodox faith, was the first scholar to receive a visiting scholarship, for his lecture series on questions of Byzantine studies.

Br. Elio Passeto, NDS, Vice-Rector of *Ratisbonne*, has rounded up this semester of the Christian study programme of Judaism. One of the highlights of the series was the symposium on Jewish/Christian studies in honour of **Br. Pierre Lenhardt, NDS**. The proceedings will be published in *Ratisbonne's Cahiers Ratisbonne*.

While writing these lines, the sad news arrived that **Prelate Dusing** has been called to the Lord. We praise the Lord for the life of this great ecumenical priest, for this pioneer of reconciliation between the Churches and for our beloved spiritual father of Jerusalem.

Best wishes to all for a blessed year 2000! Once again we are led to the conclusion that we have a Faithful, Omniscient God who is "able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20). The truth of His love for us remains, sustaining us and giving us an example to follow (John 3:16). Our Lord's motivation to give His best was love. May we live in the light of His example in all of our ways!

Fraternally yours, Rev. Petra Heldt (Exec.Secretary)