

ECUMENICAL Theological Research FRATERNITY in Israel

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President: Prof Fr Marcel Dubois OP Executive Secretary: Rev Petra Heldt

NEWSLETTER NO. 17

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Dear Friends,

With summer well on our doorstep we greet all of our friends in Israel and abroad from a Jerusalem basking in sunshine and flowers! This contrasts somewhat with the routine of Christian presence in the Holy Land. With the recent political developments in Jerusalem with Israel and the Palestinian Authority on the one hand and in the North between Israel and Lebanon on the other, Christians are on their guard to adjust. More and more churches in Jerusalem find themselves now partly under the jurisdiction of Israel and partly under the one of the Palestinian Authority; while Christians in the North, seek to ensure their lives. The question if political aims and moral responsibilities converge in the Holy Land is much discussed here. Please remember these matters in your prayers.

"Friday Prayers"

The "Friday Prayers" for the Fraternity in Jerusalem and for all her contacts started many years ago at the Cathedral of Luebeck/Germany. Last year, the Cathedral of Coventry/UK also took the Fraternity as a matter of concern for their "Friday Prayers". The links to these two Cathedrals have become strong and show a mutual enrichment. Thank you to all who join in the "Friday Prayers"!

The Fraternity's Research Project

Moral responsibilities in response to the challenges of a changing world are apropos. This year, the Fraternity chose to face medical challenges.

Bringing the academic year to a full circle, **Professor Gideon Bach**, Head of the Department of Medical Genetics in *Hadassah Hospital*, lectured on "Genetics and Ethics: Prenatal Diagnostics". He discussed the pros and cons of prenatal diagnostics in a world that is able for instance, to detect congenital abnormalities, genetically-related or not. Do parents and doctors need to implement this knowledge and are they obliged to act in case of abnormalities? This question becomes complex if, as it is the case in Israel, a child with a serious genetic disease makes a legal claim of 'wrongful life', with the demand not to be born and that genetic testing should have been performed and action taken accordingly. The question becomes critical - Where are Christian guidelines for doctors and parents?

The End of the Year

The *Annual General Meeting* will be held on Thursday June 15. It has been a blessing to work together with the members of the current team!

We look forward to the Fraternity Retreat which has been set for the next day. This year we will visit our friends in their beautiful surroundings of Latrun. The morning will be spent in the Trappist Monastery with the monks, reflecting on the Jubilee. The topic for the day will be "The Spiritual Significance of the Jubilee 2000", under the leadership of Sr. Anne Catherine Avril NDS. A walk in the afternoon will bring us to the Protestant Jesus' Brotherhood of the Community of Latrun where the Retreat will be continued.

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Visitors from Abroad

It was a pleasure to welcome **Rev Canon Andrew White** and a group of 45 from the UK on March 29-April 7. One of their aims was to establish a third *Cross of Nails Centre* in Israel, this time in Sfaram at *St. Paul's Anglican Church*. A good old friend, **Rev. Paul Hoffman** graced us with his presence at the end of April along with a group of pilgrims from Germany, including the former Presiding Bishop of the German Protestant Church, **Rev. Kruse**. A delegation of the *NCLCI* in the USA came for exchanging notes on recent developments of the Christian presence in Israel and its impact on the classical churches in the USA. The same concern was a topic of discussion with the personal envoy of the Presiding Bishop of the *Episcopal Church of the USA*, **Bishop Walmsley**. For the same reason, contacts with the *Scottish Presbyterian Church in Scotland* have been renewed through the newly-appointed representative for Jewish-Christian relations in this church, **Rev. Margaret Muir**. Amongst the steady stream of pilgrims to the Fraternity from all over the world was also *The International Women's Forum of New York*, including scholars from Greece, Italy and the USA, and participants from Austria and Switzerland and the media from Canada, France and the UK.

Volunteers on the Move

If it weren't for **Miss Sybilla Rufus-Isaacs**, our office would not have experienced the fantastic expansion of our computerized international contact list which she has been instrumental in developing. Sybilla has kindly devoted five weeks to the Fraternity and we will

miss her being with us as she returns to England already on the 29th of May. We wish her all the best in her studies of French and Spanish this coming year at the *University of Edinburgh*.

Miss Hanh Do, our *Hebrew University* intern who has faithfully and diligently contributed to our catalogue project, has come to the end of her year in Jerusalem. With much respect and gratitude we say good-bye to Hanh, a student of religious studies.

Visa Issues.....Cont.

The policies concerning visas allocated to Christian volunteers and workers in this country continue to be a matter of discussion, research and action, on the part of the 'Fraternity Visa Committee'. In response to a request from **Mr. Ariel Kennet**, Advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Fraternity Committee compiled a dossier on the problems encountered by the broad spectrum of Christian organizations in this country. A summary of these was composed and on May 16, a letter delivered to the *Interministerial Committee for Christian Affairs*, chaired by **MK Haim Ramon**. In order to establish clear guidelines for Christian visas it is necessary first of all to clarify the issues involved and to make certain essential distinctions between the latter and those bodies interested in the importing of foreign workers, for example.

The Armenian Genocide Memorial Service

The 85th Anniversary of the 1915-genocide of well over one million Armenians by the Ottoman Turks was

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remembered in a solemn spirit of prayer and unity with the Armenian community of Jerusalem, at a service held at *St. James Cathedral* on April 24. This enormous tragedy has recently been added to the curriculum of Israeli schools, as an important fact to be taught and remembered. The 'Armenian Genocide Memorial Service' was attended by a delegation of Israeli government officials including Minister of Education **MK Yosi Sarid**.

German Catholic Bishops Conference

Also on the 24th of April a reception was held in honour of the visit of the *Commission for International Church Affairs* of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Germany. Its President, **HE Bishop Dr. Franz Kamphaus** received us at the *Notre Dame*, with words of encouragement to the local Christian community, affirming the support of his *Commission* and of their awareness of the current situation of a dwindling Christian presence in the land. Their united desire is to strengthen the local Christian communities. The visit was prepared by an impressive study of the situation of the Christians in the Holy Land, by **Theodor Hanf** (Germany) and **Bernard Sabella** (Bethlehem University), entitled "The Social Situation of Christian Minorities in the Holy Land." We recommend this most important study for your own perusal.

We are pleased to announce that the *Mar Ephrem Public School* of the Bethlehem Syrian Orthodox community now has an address! The property was purchased this past month, thanks to the generous support of the *Coventry Community of the Cross of Nails* and the *Barnabas Fund*. The residential building

will be adapted for the use of a school, including the addition of a second floor for additional classroom space. This September operations will begin with two Kindergarten classes.

The Syrian Orthodox Summer Camp

From June 24-July 1 we will have a renewal of last year's youth camp at *Tabgha*, for over 50 children. Once again, this event is made possible through funding provided by the *Community Cross of Nails* and *The Barnabas Fund* of the UK and the *Northelbian Church* in Germany. Is there another source of funding for next year's camp?

The Student Christian Forum

Easter in Jerusalem for the Christian students at the *Hebrew University* was exciting especially for those who took advantage of the opportunity to participate in the Resurrection-Day Procession on April 16 on the Mount of Olives. A group led by **Dr. Kirsten Stoffregen-Pedersen** joined with the festive crowd of believers in a risen Christ.

This year's final event of the SCF took place on Saturday May 27. Dr. Stoffregen-Pedersen planned a tour of the Ethiopian Orthodox Monasteries in the Old City. As an expert on the history, faith and customs of the Ethiopian community, Sr. Abraham added quality to fun!

Fraternally yours, Rev. Petra Heldt

PUBLICATIONS

IMMANUEL

Malcolm Lowe (Ed.)
People, Land and the State of Israel, Jewish and Christian Perspectives
IMMANUEL 22/23 (1989) 50:-NIS

Malcolm Lowe (Ed.)
The New Testament and Christian-Jewish Dialogue. Studies in Honor of David Flusser
IMMANUEL 24/255 (1990) 55:-NIS

Malcolm Lowe (Ed.)
Orthodox Christians and Jews on Continuity and Renewal
IMMANUEL 26/27 (1994) 60:-NIS

SERIES OF OCCASIONAL STUDIES

J. Robert Wright
The Holy Sepulchre. The Church of the Resurrection (1995) 10:-NIS

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Kirsten Stoffregen-Pedersen
The Ethiopian Church and its Community in Jerusalem (1994) 5:-NIS

Kirsten Stoffregen-Pedersen
Die aethiopische Kirche von Afrika bis nach Jerusalem (1994) 10:-NIS

Marcel Dubois OP
Les Oliviers de Saint Isaie (1995) 10:-NIS

Council of Christians and Jews (Ed.)
The Mountain of the Lord. Israel and the Church (1996) 50:-NIS