

ECUMENICAL Theological Research FRATERNITY in Israel

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President: Dr. Kirsten Stoffregen Pedersen | Executive Secretary: Rev. Petra Heldt

NEWSLETTER NO. 28 January 2002

Dear Friends,

January 8 marked the year anniversary of the signing of a three-fold covenant agreement between the Syrian Orthodox Church in Jerusalem and the Anglican Church communities in Coventry and in Kaduna, Nigeria! The Fraternity rejoices in this year of blessed cooperation with the different Churches of Jerusalem and their dioceses around the world. Current developments which we discuss in this Newsletter show us that the year 2002 is sure to bring more good news in the field of ecumenical and interfaith relations! Looking upward and forward together with you, our faithful friends and colleagues.

ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

The Fraternity Series 2001/2002

Communal Identity and Diversity in Judaism and Christianity. Faces of Religious Communities in Jerusalem. On Jan 31 Archimandrite Jeronim Cretu, a representative of the Romanian Orthodox Church in Jerusalem, presented a lecture on the identity of his Church in current circumstances; kept busy by the increased activity due to the influx of thousands of Romanian workers to the country, Archimandrite Cretu spoke about rising to this new challenge in the context of oikumene in the Romanian Christian tradition.

Special Lectures

*Prof. Tord Fornberg spoke at the Rainbow on January 2nd on the topic, "Emperor Ashoka from Warfare to Reconciliation. A Chapter in Indian History of Religions".

CHARITABLE SERVICES

The Syrian Orthodox Community

Despina who had an operation for scoliosis this past year has suffered from complications following the procedure. This week's follow-up operation at Hadassah Hospital has thankfully cleared the infection. The family is most grateful for your

prayers and donations on her behalf. Their courage is a witness of their living faith in God who helps those who call upon Him.

Donations

Many thanks to the visitors from Germany for generously leaving so much of their clothing for needy Christians in the land!

Our plea on behalf of the underprivileged continues to move hearts around the globe. Sincere thanks to the friends of local Christians particularly in Canada, Germany & the UK!

CHURCH ACTIVITIES

An Interfaith Gathering

January 20-22 marked a historic interfaith conference in Alexandria, Egypt. Convened by the Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey and supported by both Israeli PM Ariel Sharon and Chairman Arafat, the conference produced a declaration that reads:

According to our faith [and] traditions, killing innocents in the name of God is a desecration of His holy name, and defames religion in the world. The violence in the Holy Land is an evil which must be opposed by all people of good faith. We seek to live together as neighbours, respecting the integrity of each other's historical and religious inheritance. We call upon all to oppose incitement, hatred and the misrepresentation of the other.

The full text of the Declaration is available at the Fraternity.

The delegations from the UK, Israel, the PA and Egypt included: The Archbishop of Canterbury; Chief Sephardi Rabbi Elyahu Bakshi-Doron; Rabbi Michael Melchior, Deputy Foreign Minister; the Latin Patriarch Michel Sabbah; the Melkite Archbishop Boutros Mualem; the Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem Rt. Rev. Riah Abu El-Assal and representatives of the Greek and Armenian Patriarchs; Sheikh Taisir Tamimi, chief justice of the Sharia courts; Sheikh Talal Sider, Minister of

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State for the PA; Sheikh Mohammed Sayed Tantawi, head of Al-Azhar University in Cairo.

The Fraternity is honoured to have had the opportunity in serving as the local coordinator for the conference arrangements, co-labouring with the organizing committee of the Archbishop of Canterbury. It was determined that a permanent committee will be set up to carry out the recommendations of the declaration.

Week of Prayer

"For with you is the fountain of Life" (Psalm 36:9) was the theme this year for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2002 held on January 20-27 in Jerusalem. In the words of the organizers: "The symbol of the fountain reminds us of the necessity to return to the origin, to the principle, to the roots, to the essential. Faith, prayer and common action can make water spring even from the desert rock of bitterness and cleanse the sin of division in Christendom." This year the meetings were particularly well-attended, with a spirit of togetherness felt by all. For those unfamiliar with the event: Ecumenical prayers are hosted during one week each year by all the Churches of Jerusalem (Orthodox, Catholic & Protestant).

This Week of Prayer was like an island of peace that was accompanied by a shooting attack and a bombing terror attack on Jaffa Road.

FRATERNITY COMMUNITY NEWS

Jerusalem University College

We have learned this month that the JUC will continue with studies this semester after all! The reduced classes will be conducted more in the form of tutorials.

Holocaust Studies

Yad Vashem's International School for Holocaust Studies is hosting the Third International Conference on April 8-11, 2002 in Jerusalem, entitled "The Legacy of Holocaust Survivors. The Moral and Ethical Implications for Humanity". For more information: www.yadvashem.org or

conference@yadvashem.org.il.

A Sad Farewell

Many of you remember well Dr. Shaul Colbi, author of the classic, "Christian Presence in the Holy Land". As the director of the Department for Christian Affairs at the Ministry of Religious Affairs, he was always helpful to the Christian community and his extensive work of research has been appreciated far and wide already for the past decade. Dr. Colbi passed away on Jan 17.

Visitors

A delegation of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Canon Andrew White and The Honourable Tom Kay-Shuttleworth; Sr. Margaret Shepherd, nds and her assistant Jane from the UK; Gisela Radde from Germany together with a group; David Blewett of the NCLCI brought a delegation including Rev. Bill Harter, Sr. Rose Thering, Sr. Marge Boyle; a Yad le Yad group came from America; Rabbi Dr. Gerald M. Meister of the Ocean Parkway Jewish Center in Brooklyn, NY; a British-Dutch conference was held at Ramat Rachel, including Tim Vince, editor of the UK publication "Christians and Israel"; Julia Fisher of Premier Christian Radio in London together with a group of Church leaders from the UK; Bishop John B. Taylor, Bishop of St. Albans, UK together with a group of other church leaders from the UK; a group of German pastors invited by the Israeli Ministry of Tourism. We were so glad to see all of you!

Student Christian Forum

SCF Director and Fraternity President, Dr. Kirsten Stoffregen Pedersen celebrated her 70th birthday this past year. In her honour, Tantur Ecumenical Institute has kindly organized a day of celebration to take place on February 26. Speakers will include Sr. Abraham; Dr. Knud Jeppesen of Tantur; Prof. Steve Kaplan of the Hebrew University. The day will be crowned by dinner. To register, please contact the Fraternity offices.

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Members

The newest Corresponding Members: Rev. Manfred K. Bahmann PhD (USA); Prof. Dr. Michael Bongardt (Germany); Prof. Andre Lacocque (USA).

PUBLICATIONS

From the USA

Dr. Morris Inch, a Corresponding Member of the ETRFI is the author of 24 books including the soon-to-be-released "Why Take the Bible Seriously?". His publication website is: www.geocities.com/inchcraft/inchcraft.html.

Conference Proceedings

The Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary organized last April 17-20, a Repentance Conference in Jerusalem. A compilation of the talks and testimonies is now available in both English and German. For copies contact Beit Avraham: beth-avr@internet-zahav.net .

Fraternity Productions

Reminder: We are ready for your orders of the new booklet prepared in our offices, a compilation of the homiletic reflections at the memorial service held in honour of the late Fr. Johannes Alois Duesing. Cost: 10 NIS or \$2.

In the spirit of prayer may I encourage us to turn anew in this new year to the One and only "Fountain of Life".

Rev. Petra Heldt