

ECUMENICAL Theological Research FRATERNITY in Israel

POB 249 | 91002 Jerusalem | Tel: 625 4941 | Fax 672 4237 | Email: ecu_frat@netvision.net.il

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

NEWSLETTER NO. 29 March 2002

Dear Friends,

I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul makes its boast in the Lord; let the afflicted hear and be glad. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together! Ps 34, 1-3. Even in times of great distress such as those often faced by King David, we can turn to God in praise. In the midst of pain, sorrow, and despair, God *sits enthroned over the flood* (Ps 29, 10). Thank you for your continued prayers. He gives us *peace that passes all understanding*.

ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

Lecture Series 2001/2002

The Fraternity joined with Tantur and Caspari Center on Tuesday the 26th of February to organize a day of lectures devoted to the study of "Psalm 151 in Ethiopian Tradition" -in honour of the 70th birthday of our President, **Dr. Kirsten Stoffregen Pedersen** (alias Sr. Abraham). Most unfortunately Sr. Abraham was not well enough to join in the celebration but we were somehow regardless inspired by this day devoted to her long life and work in the Holy Land. Her lecture was read by **Bodil Skjott**: "Psalm 151 - 'Andemta'", followed by **Prof. Knud Jeppesen's** "Psalm 151 in Greek, Hebrew and Danish" and **Prof. Steve Kaplan's** "Power & Image in the Ethiopian Cult of Mary". The afternoon's lectures were followed by a reception attended by a room full of Sr. Abraham's friends, including even **Fr. Yaakov Willebrands** from the Galilee! Dinner was served, with a wonderful menu and program hosted by **Prof. Knud & Ida Jeppesen**. To Sr. Abraham: *Ad mea ve esrim!* We are all so grateful for your friendship that brings us together, from such different backgrounds!

Special Lectures

*Tantur Ecumenical Institute presents **Dr. Joseph Blenkinsopp**, Professor of Old Testament at the University of Notre Dame speaking on Monday April 8 at 3:45 pm on the topic: "The Bible, Archeology and Politics".

*The Swedish Theological Institute has an interesting program for April. On Monday the 29th at 4:00 pm, **Rev. Dr. Jesper Svartvik** will speak on "Jesus and the Jewish Food Laws: Mark 7:1-23 in its Narrative and Historical Contexts." On the 30th, **Bishop Krister Stendahl** and **Rev. Svartvik** will present "The First Official document from the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Sweden on the relationship between Christians and Jews."

CHARITABLE SERVICES

Donations

In answer to the continuing crisis we have been glad to forward gifts to the various Christian communities: to the Coptic Orthodox of Jerusalem from **Teamwork** (UK); to the Syrian Orthodox of Bethlehem from **Rachel Bardach** and from various anonymous supporters. We are thankful for all support of Christians in the Palestinian areas at this horrible moment of war.

Our office has been blessed with a new computer thanks to the help of **Rev. Ingrid Homann**. We can now honestly claim to have joined the 21st century in full force!

CHURCH ACTIVITIES

The Alexandria Declaration in Rome

On March 13, the First Alexandria Declaration of the religious leaders of the Holy Land was endorsed by **Pope John Paul II**. The Alexandria delegation led by **Archbishop of Canterbury Dr. George**

ECUMENICAL Theological Research FRATERNITY in Israel

POB 249 | 91002 Jerusalem | Tel: 625 4941 | Fax 672 4237 | Email: ecu_frat@netvision.net.il

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

Carey met in Rome in order to personally present *His Holiness* a framed copy of the Declaration. He welcomed them with the words: "...Our mission as men and women of religion impels us to pray for peace, to proclaim peace and to do everything in our power to help bring an end to the bloodshed. I reiterate the firm determination of the Catholic Church to work for a just peace. May Almighty God bless your efforts to foster reconciliation and trust between all the beloved people of the Holy Land."

The Alexandria Permanent Committee

Two meetings of the Permanent Committee have been held to date, since the Declaration was signed on January 21. Both were convened in Jerusalem. The first in February was chaired by the Archbishop of Canterbury's Envoy to the Middle East, **Canon Andrew White**. The Meeting stated: "We call upon both the Palestinian and Israeli leadership to immediately stop the present bloodshed and implement point 4 of the Alexandria Declaration. *As a first step now, we call for a religiously sanctioned cease-fire, respected and observed on all sides, and for the implementation of the Mitchell and Tenet recommendations, including the lifting of restrictions and a return to negotiations.*"

The second meeting was held on March 21, chaired by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The meeting was followed by a reception at Notre Dame, attended by several hundred local religious leaders and their representatives. The spirit was somber as at the very same moment, news was received of a terror attack on King George Street. The speakers which included the **Archbishop of Canterbury; Rabbi Michael Melchior** and **Archbishop Aristarchos** reminded the invitees of the ever-evident importance of promoting and implementing the Declaration in any way possible.

Easter and Passover in the Year 2002

Although there has been a significant decrease in visitors from abroad, Jerusalem's churches catered

to the local Christians with a full schedule of services held in all areas of the country. Passover, or *Pesach* began with heavy rains and thunder as families sat together for the traditional celebration of victory over their enemies at the Hand of God. The night was not eventless in more ways than one, as once again we were reminded of the ever-present existence of hate towards the Jewish people. The death count so far from the Netanya massacre has risen to 24.

FRATERNITY COMMUNITY NEWS

The Holy Prophets

Brother Elia of the Jesus-Bruderschaft presented a seminar on March 25 at the Bible Society. "The Holy Prophets - Our Common Heritage. Icons of the Eternal Covenant" exhibit will be on display until April 30, 900-1700 at the BSI -17 Jaffa Rd.

New CIC Director

Fr. Athanasios of the Custody of the Holy Land has been appointed director of the Christian Information Centre located in Jaffa Gate. Much success in your new job! The CIC provides a most valuable service to both locals and visitors to the Holy Land.

Operation Omer

The Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary based in Darmstadt Germany has initiated "Operation Omer", a continuation of the Jerusalem 2001 Convention: Changing the Future by Confronting the Past" attended by nearly 1000 Christians from over 25 countries to repudiate anti-Semitism. This initiative invites Christians world-wide to join the 50-days mourning from Passover to Pentecost (Lev 23, 15-16) during which Israel recalls her long history of persecution. Each day during this period, you are invited to join the thousands of Christians who are praying, repenting and expressing solidarity with the Jewish people. For more information: www.kanaan.org.

ECUMENICAL Theological Research FRATERNITY in Israel

POB 249 | 91002 Jerusalem | Tel: 625 4941 | Fax 672 4237 | Email: ecu_frat@netvision.net.il

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

Visitors

In February we were honoured to welcome another two groups of pastors from Germany invited by the Ministry of Tourism; a solidarity group from the USA -one of whom was seriously wounded in an attack on the hotel at which they were staying, only to proudly affirm that it would not prevent her from coming back! In March, we were pleasantly surprised by the coming of **Peter Burghold** (Germany); **Joseph Sievers** (USA); **Lucy Thorson** (Rome). An enthusiastic group of Christian and Jewish leaders from Detroit USA were truly grateful to become acquainted with the Orthodox Churches of Jerusalem.

Members

We sadly say good-bye to regular Members **Sr. Valerie Borg**; **Sr. Reem Obaid**; **Ms. Helen Sexton**. New Guest Members: **Ms. Judith Fain**; **Fr. Thomas Maier, WF**; **Mr. Glenn Witmer**. And a new Corresponding Member, in Finland! Welcome to **Prof. Grant White**, Professor of Church History and Deputy Director of the Department of Orthodox Theology at the University of Joensuu.

PUBLICATIONS

Books Received

Corresponding Member **Dr. Morris Inch** (USA) has kindly sent us copies of his most recent publications including *Two Gospel Motifs. The Original Quest & The Messianic Theophany*. Published by the University Press of America.

Yours in the Eternal Hope, Rev. Petra Heldt