

ETRFI NEWSLETTER

Issue 35

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Ecumenical Theological Research Fraternity in Israel
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Season's Greeting from Mt. Zion, Jerusalem!

The Ecumenical Theological Research Fraternity in Israel is wishing you a joyous holiday season and a Happy New Year filled with peace and happiness.

THE BILL BROUGHTON FEAST

Reverend Canon William (Bill) Broughton's 75th birthday was celebrated on 6 December 2004, which coincided with the feast of St. Nicholas. On this festive occasion, ETRFI sponsored a feast in honor of a long-time friend and supporter of ecumenism. Bill may not be a saint *per se*, but in the past forty years in Israel, Bill certainly has the charm and enthusiasm needed to spread the gift of joy and happiness to those he meet, which was evident in the number of guests who attended the feast.

—Letter from Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina

Dear Rev. Canon William,

On the occasion of the celebration of your 75th birthday anniversary, I am glad to wish you our Lord's grace, blessing and power to continue serving Him for many fruitful years to come.

Sincerely Yours,
Aristarchos, Archbishop of Constantina
Jerusalem
Thursday, December 02, 2004

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—Archaeology and Early Christianity Conference

The feast started off with a conference focusing on Archeology and Early Christianity held at the Jerusalem University College on Mt. Zion. The conference room was filled with guests and the all four lectures were well received with much enthusiasm.

Trude Dothan, Professor of Archaeology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and Bill's professor many years ago, gave a lecture on *Ekron of the Bible: The Rise and Fall of a Philistine City-State. Part One: Iron Age I*. A comprehensive summary of the various layers found during the last two decades of excavation at the site was presented and her expertise and detailed description with instructive slides about the excavation and findings proved to captivate all of us.

Seymour Gitin, Dorot Director & Professor of Archaeology, W.F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research, continued with *Ekron of the Bible: The Rise and Fall of a Philistine City-State. Part Two: Iron Age II*. The lecture included the inscription found at Tel Miqne that confirms the identification of Ekron, one of the five capitals of Philistine mentioned in the Bible.

Ross Voss, Publications Coordinator for Ashkelon Excavations, informed about the *Cult in the Canaanite Gate of Ashkelon*. For the first time, he could establish the cult due to a bronze statuette of a bull calf discovered near the gate. Calves and bulls were associated with the worship of the Canaanite gods El and Baal during the Canaanite period.

The unforgettable lecture on *Eschatology and the Quest for the Historical Jesus* came from **Fr. Benedict Viviano, OP**, Acting Head of the Department for Biblical Studies at the University of Fribourg, and long-time friend of Bill. His erudite research on the historical Jesus will become available soon on our website: <http://www.etrfi.org>.

—Bach for Bill Concert

The feast turned out to be *Ode to the Old City* judging from the very many friends who came from the Old City to the exciting music recital by **Elizabeth Roloff. Probst Martin Reyer** opened the Redeemer Church to welcome all and gave a warm blessing to Bill.

—Grande Finale Reception

After the concert, guests filled the reception hall to capacity and were treated to an evening of delicious food and plenty of dessert. Guests gave toasts to Bill and joined in on the singing of Bill's favorite songs, with the gifted **Inna Dudakova** at the piano. The entire day was filled with excitement and ended with much pleasure.

—“Thank You!” to the following people for their contribution:

The feast would not have been possible without the help of **Natalie King**, who organized much of the preparations, including the creation of the beautiful invitation, and logistics.

In Natalie's absence, **Hanh Do** continued with the preparations, including the creation of the day's programs, and logistics for the big day. Hanh made final arrangements and had to

miss much of the feast due to ongoing matters throughout the day. But, she still managed to take several memorable photographs and enjoyed the festivity.

We must give thanks to **Paul and Diane Wright** for hosting the conference at the Jerusalem University College. We appreciate their support, care, and their going out of their way to share in the festive occasion.

Thanks also go to **Sabina Klempp** who helped prepare the banquet and baked the delicious birthday cake (Schwarzwaelder Kirschtorte) for the reception; she also created the flowers given to guests at the feast.

We would also like to thank **Mechthild and Hans-Karl Henne-Kraye** for their help at the reception. Their support was much needed with the substantial number of guests in attendance.

ANNUAL RETREAT

—“Ashkelon: Between the Text and the Spade” on 18 June 2004

This year’s annual retreat went to Ashkelon. The archaeological dig at Ashkelon was led by **Dr. Lawrence Stager** and **Dr. Ross Voss**. The excavation team has worked diligently for the past ten years to unearth 250 acres of civilized settlement and thousands of years of history to be studied.

Forty participants from the Oriental, Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant faith went to Ashkelon to visit the site and to participate in an ecumenical service at the Byzantine Church of Maria Viridis (Mary of the Green) led by Bishop Aris Shirvastian of the Armenian Orthodox Church, together with our members from the Ethiopian, Syrian, Lutheran, Anglican, and Catholic Churches. This was the first church service at the ruin after the Basilica’s destruction in the 11th century.

Dr. Stager, who excavated all 23 levels at the site, gave a tour of Level 23 (ground level.) **Dr. Jill**, Director of Pottery, guided participants through the viewing of the pottery discovered. There were examples of complete vessels that once contained oil, grain, and wine 2,000 years ago. Dr. Voss gave a lecture on the newly discovered Middle Bronze Gate of Ashkelon. At this site, there is a memorial for the young Armenian priest who died while excavating some years ago.

There were two study groups in the afternoon. The first was led by **Fr. Michael McGarry** on *The Tension between the Spade and the Text*. The second study group *Ashkelon: Jews and Christians in the Byzantine Period* led by **Rev. Petra Heldt**, was on the Church fathers that lived, studied, and taught at Ashkelon between the first and sixth century C.E.

The excursion was full of fun and learning. In the end, the screening of the film *Religion, War, and Civilization*, which featured the Armenian Patriarch, former-Jerusalem mayor **Teddy Kollek**, Dr. Stager, and others, had to be postponed for another occasion.

LECTURE SERIES: 2004/2005

This year's lecture series focuses on *Abstinence and Festivity in Judaism and Christianity*. Two lectures have already been given and the next lecture is scheduled for early February.

On October 28, 2004, **Yehuda Gellman** gave a lecture on "Hasidic Mysticism as an Activism." Gellman argues against the limited scope of both Martin Buber and Rivkah Schatz-Uffenheimer's approach to Hasidism. He suggests the middle ground, which is "an activist mysticism," that denies and celebrates. This type of Hasidic mysticism aspires to a radical transformation of the self.

Kirsten Stoffregen Pedersen (Sister Abraham) gave a lecture on *Abstinence and Festivity in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church* on November 11, 2004. Abstinence (fasting) and festivity (feasting) are prominent important in the Ethiopian Orthodox Tawahedo Church. Fasting is practiced in the Ethiopian Church mainly in connection with food and sleep, and could be in accordance with penance and a sign of conversion. Feasting (8 majors and 9 minors) is celebrated by all members starting at the age of 7 belonging to the Ethiopian Church that is dedicated to the mystery of being celebrated.

SYRIAN ORTHODOX COMMUNITY OF BETHLEHEM

The Syrian Orthodox community in Bethlehem has received many blessings this year. These blessings enabled the community retain a much-loved member and to continue in its growth while maintaining its identity.

—Immediate Support to Community Member

Through international support and coordination, **Bassem Ayoub** was able to have the heart surgery needed to save his life. The support given allowed the medical staff at Hadassah Hospital at Ein Karem to save Bassem's life. Thus, Bassem has the opportunity to continue to live his life as a husband, father, and grandfather. During time of uncertainty, it is wonderful to see that different people are willing to work together to save the life of a fellow human being.

—Summer Trip

The scouts had the opportunity to venture up north this past summer. They spent many days in the Tabgha, Tiberius area on a camping trip that helped replenish their spirits.

—First Syrian Orthodox School

The major highlight of the year occurred in September 2004 when the *first* Syrian Orthodox School was opened in Bethlehem. The school was made possible by many generous and private donations. Currently, nearly 50 students attend the school and the second grade is the highest class level. The class level will increase with the age of the schoolchildren. A second building is going to be built next to the current building in the future.

UPDATES

—The Student Christian Forum (SCF)

Under the direction of **Sister Abraham** (Kirsten Stoffregen Pedersen), SCF remains active, especially in the last two months. On 23 November, SCF met at the Swedish Theological Institute to discuss *Ecumenical and Interfaith Work in Jerusalem*. SCF was invited to attend the St. Lucia Feast at the Institute as well. The Christmas meeting was held on 14 December at the Swedish Theological Institute.

—Volunteer

While ETRFI Administrator Natalie King is on a restful vacation with her family abroad, **Hanh Do** has returned to Israel as an intern to assist ETRFI for the remaining six weeks of 2004. Her first internship with the Fraternity was in 1999-2000 while studying at the Rothberg International School at Hebrew University on Mt. Scopus. She received a dual B.A. degree in Humanities & Religious Studies and Jewish Studies from California State University, Sacramento in 2001. Hanh is currently a student at the University of Denver working on a dual Master's degree in International Administration and Conflict Resolution. Her future career plan is to work in the field of religious conflict. We wish Hanh continued success and hope that one day she will be able to work in cooperation with the Fraternity again.

ABOUT THE ETRFI

The Ecumenical Theological Research Fraternity in Israel was founded in 1966 by a group of professors, theologians, and lay people in Jerusalem. They shared the perspective that recent history demanded a fundamental consideration of Christian attitudes towards the Jewish faith and people, and that the State of Israel offered a unique setting for facing this task together.

Today, the ETRFI is the recognized roof-organization for Christians engaged in Christian-Jewish dialogue in Israel. It is also the ecumenical group containing the widest range of members from all the historic churches.

LEADERSHIP

President:	Dr. Kirsten Stoffregen Pedersen
Vice-President:	Rev. Canon William Broughton
Executive Secretary:	Rev. Dr. Petra Heldt
Treasurer:	Br. Elio Passeto, NDS

MEMBERSHIP

Members of the ETRFI represent the Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox Churches in approximately equal numbers, totaling more than one hundred, both locally and abroad. To become a member, please send us a request and we will provide you with the details.

SUPPORT ETRFI

Donations can be made by cheque and sent to our postal address. Or, via bank transfer addressed to: Ecumenical Fraternity; Union Bank; Main Branch; 34, Jaffa Rd; Jerusalem; Account # 10638/62.

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ETRFI Newsletter Issue 35 was written and prepared by Hanh Do.