

NEWS from the

## ECUMENICAL FRATERNITY

NEWSLETTER NO. 7

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# Dear Friends,

Those of us who were here for the last six months will not easily forget such a period. First, the experience of being under nightly attack, even though Jerusalem residents were spared from missile hits. Then the arrival of almost the entire Ethiopian Jewish community - 14,400 in one day - just weeks after the entire Albanian Jewish community arrived more quietly.

The continued importance of Christian-Jewish dialogue here was underlined by the large attendances at two events featuring Rt Rev Prof Krister Stendahl: a lecture at the Swedish Theological Institute and a public discussion with Rabbi Prof David Hartman and Rev Prof Marcel Dubois. Simultaneously, the significance of our work has been felt more strongly abroad than before.

So it seemed when the Executive Secretary was kindly invited by Rev Hans Schwegler, Rev Georg Braunschweig and Prof Clemens Thoma to Switzerland in March. Whether in the

faculty of Prof Thoma in Lucerne or in lectures around the country, the interest was intense.

In this period the Fraternity lost one of its dearest Jewish friends, not through war but from prolonged illness. Rabbi Menahem was a model for all of us: uncompromisingly true to the tradition in which he was raised, yet a ready friend to any other person of faith; possessing a phenomenal memory of Judaic sources, while at the same time fascinated with the Jewishness of the New Testament.

He was a renowned bridge not just between Jew and Christian, but also between Jew and Jew and even between Christian and Christian. For all who were privileged to know him and to enjoy his friendship, no more need be said.

It is our hope that gradually parts of Rabbi Menahem's voluminous notes on the Judaic parallels to the New Testament can be made available in print. A sample was given in our journal *Immanuel* (No. 21, pp. 43-54), and a further article will appear in the forthcoming No. 24/25.



# Study Programme

We are happy to report that the war situation caused no cancellations in our lecture programme on the theme "Praying in Jerusalem". However, the lectures for January (see the previous newsletter) and February were advanced to the afternoons of the days concerned. Thus on February 21 Abbot Nikolaus Egender, OSB, of the Dormition Monastery gave his scheduled lecture on "Jerusalem in the Prayer of the Eastern Churches - The Consciousness and Meaning of Jerusalem in the Prayers of the Eastern Churches and Pilgrims". Attended by representatives of the churches concerned, it reflected his long experience both in Catholic-Orthodox dialogue and as an "honorary member" of the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem.

Prof Maureen Fritz, nds, spoke on March 21 about the question "Prayer and Jerusalem - Ayeh?". Here Ayeh ("Where?") asks: Where can God's presence be found, where does He dwell? Prof Fritz, who teaches at the University of St Michael's College in Toronto as well as directing English-language studies at the Ratisbonne Centre in Jerusalem, gave answers from the Bible, Talmud, Siddur and medieval Jewish masters.

On April 24 Br Pierre Lenhardt, NDS, spoke on "The Land of Israel in the Faith and Prayer of a Christian". He developed ideas from his contribution to the recent book *Een bevrijdend woord uit Jeruzalem?* edited by our outgoing President, Rev Dr Geert Cohen Stuart, which also contains articles by the editor, Bruno Hussar and Malcolm Lowe (all Fraternity members), as well as David Hartman, Daniel Rossing, Jeremy Milgrom, Natan T. Lopes Cardozo, Yehezkel Landau and Uriel Simon, all in response to the so-called "Palestinian Theology" from the authors' respective Jewish and Christian viewpoints. The editor is seeking publishers for translations of the book into other languages, including English, in which such a book is much needed. Offers and suggestions can be sent to our office.

During the year a small study group met several times to discuss a draft on "Four Crises of Religion in the Holy Land" presented by our member, Rev Prof Thomas Stransky, Rector of the Tantur Ecumenical Institute. The draft was subsequently presented by Prof Stransky in a meeting of the Jerusalem Rainbow Group and at a public lecture in Tantur in order to hear further reactions, all of which he intends to take into account in an eventual published version.

At the Annual Retreat for Fraternity members, held on May 25, Dr Yaakov Ariel initiated a discussion on "Joy of Faith and Respect for the Other". Dr Ariel's special field is the interest of Evangelical Christians in his country, the State of Israel. He pointed out how easily joy in one's own faith can go together with scorn for other manifestations of religious faith. We are challenged to maintain the insight, reflected notably in documents of the Second Vatican Council, that our joy in knowing God should open our eyes to see His providence at work elsewhere.

The next day the Annual General Meeting elected Rev Prof Marcel Dubois to be our new President and renewed the mandate of our Executive Secretary, Rev Petra Heldt, for a further two years. Rev Rien van der Vegt left the Steering Committee and will continue with Sr Vicky Vargas, nds, and Sr Abraham to organise the Fraternity's Student Christian Forum. Two vacancies on the Steering Committee were filled by the election of Br Pierre Lenhardt, NDS, and Pastor Ermanno Garbi of the Seventh Day Adventist community in Jerusalem.

Prof Dubois, currently Director of the Ratisbonne Centre, has had a distinguished career in the Hebrew University's Philosophy Department. He has been made an Israeli citizen and awarded the Legion of Honour of his native France. Among many other prizes, he most recently received the Raul Wallenberg Award. We are most grateful that he accepted the invitation to become our President, despite his



many other commitments. We also congratulate the new Steering Committee members, both long established Jerusalem residents and fluent Hebrew speakers.

## Visitors

As reported in the French and German editions of our last newsletter, in January our office was honoured by a visit from His Beatitude Michel Sabbah, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, who pronounced our work "important" and "essential". Earlier, thanks to our member Prof Thomas Stransky, our Executive Secretary was privileged to meet Most Rev George Carey, recently chosen Archbishop of Canterbury. With a long record of commitment to Christian-Jewish dialogue, we wish him God's blessing in all the tasks that accompany his office.

In February, with the war still in progress, came Rev Dr Francesco Fumagalli, Secretary of the Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, who learned his Hebrew while researching medieval Jewish manuscripts in Israel. Other visitors were Dr Arpad Fasang, member of the Presidency of the Jewish-Christian Dialogue Association in Hungary, Very Rev Bruce McLeod and Mr Shlomo Howard from Canada, and Dr Michael Pragai, author of *Faith and Fulfilment: Christians and the Return to the Promised Land* (1985).

In March, with the revival of pilgrimage and tourism, came Rev Ingrid Homann and under her guidance a study group from the Northelbian Church. We thank her, her church, its parishes and members, and especially Dr Klaus Sensche, for their many expressions of support for our work.

In April we welcomed Rev Den Hertog and Rev Beisma, Secretary and Chairman of the Board of the Christian Reformed Church in the Netherlands, which showed especial interest in the recent issue of our journal *Immanuel*

on "People, Land and State of Israel: Jewish and Christian Perspectives" (237 pp.). The next issue, No. 24/25 on "The New Testament and Christian-Jewish Dialogue", a Festschrift for Prof David Flusser containing articles by his pupils and friends, will shortly go to the press.

Prof Ambrogio Spreafico and Mr Claudio Betti of the Community of S. Egidio in Rome, which organised the prayer for peace by world religious leaders in Assisi, also came in April. So did Prof Jeffrey K. Hadden, Professor of Sociology at the University of Virginia, a leading authority on television evangelism. Mr Heribert Krane, local Director of Aktion Sühnezeichen, brought from Germany its Chairman, Rev Klaus Geyer, and Mrs Marianne Regensburger, member of its Executive Committee. We thank her parish in Berlin, Neuwestend, for its support.

Rev Jim Richardson and Mr Paul Mendel led a study group from the British Council of Christians and Jews, including the Bishop of Ripon. We also welcomed Dr David Littman, Representative of the World Union for Progressive Judaism at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Rev Ingrid von Passavant and her husband from Switzerland, Rev Paul Hoffman of the Berliner Missionswerk and Rev Hannes Gänssbauer of the Evangelisches Missionswerk, Hamburg. We especially thank Rev Gänssbauer and the EMW for renewing their support for *Immanuel* and the work of our Executive Secretary.

In May we heard a lecture by Bat Ye'or, author of *The Dhimmi: Jews and Christians under Islam* (1985), about a sequel to be published shortly by Le Cerf. Sr Michiko Ohta, Secretary General of the Catholic "Hand for Peace" in Japan, and here on behalf of an ecumenical Gulf Evacuees Relief Committee, enriched us with her insights. Rev Hermann Keller came with his study group from Hamburg. Rev Alfred Debus of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Evangelischen Jugend in Deutschland led a group to promote visits from East Germany. The Council for the Relationship between



the Church and Israel of the Netherlands Reformed Church sent its Chairman, Rev Cor van Gelder, Secretary, Rev Dr Henk Vreekamp, counsellor, the Rev Oebele van der Ploeg, and Mrs Riet de Jong-van der Kar, member of its Executive. We also welcomed back Sir Sigmund Sternberg, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the International Council of Christians and Jews, and his gracious wife, Lady Hazel, on a visit during which his seventieth birthday was widely celebrated.

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As reported in our previous newsletter, the Fraternity joined in founding the Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel on January 16. The ICCI now also includes the following institutions as voting members: American Jewish Committee (Israel Office), Anti-Defamation League, Leo Baeck School, Bridges for Peace, B'nai B'rith Hillel, Tantur Ecumenical Institute, Jerusalem Centre for Interreligious Dialogue, American Jewish Congress, Clergy for Peace, Focolari, Sisters of Zion, Inter Homines, Martin Buber Institute, Melitz, YMCA, Shalom Hartman Institute, Givat Haviva, World Jewish Congress, Center for Conservative Judaism, Gesher Maaminim, Merkaz Ami, French Protestant Federation in Israel, Israel Colloquium. Others are negotiating to join.

In addition, a considerable number of personalities strongly involved in inter-faith activities have joined on an ad personam basis: Prof Hava Lazarus-Yaffe, Prof Andre Chouraqui, Prof Shemaryahu Talmon, Prof Zvi Werblowsky, Sheikh Wajdi Al-Tabari, Dr Subhi Abu Ghosh, Dr Geoffrey Wigoder, Dr M.B. Resnikoff, Dr Mithkal Natour, Dr Ali Khider, Dr Meir Gabbai, Ambassador Moshe Gilboa, Mrs Noemi Teasdale, Mr Uri Mor, Rabbi Ehud Bandel and others.

Since the primary remit of the ICCI is to promote the activities of and cooperation between its members, it has begun issuing a regular calendar of current events for members and visitors to

Israel. The May and June issues each contained over 100 events with an interfaith dimension.

In addition, however, the ICCI held a second consultation on June 4, at which a keynote lecture on "The Status Quo in the Holy Places" was given by Judge Stephen Adler, Vice-President of the National Labour Court in Israel. This was reported at length in the *Jerusalem Post*, as was a series of showings and discussions of "The Bible in Film" jointly sponsored by the ICCI and the Jerusalem Cinematheque. Also the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the ICCI joined Mayor Teddy Kollek in giving the laudations when Sir Sigmund Sternberg was awarded the Jerusalem Medal in silver for his many contributions to improved interreligious relations.

The ICCI will soon begin to make available its own informational material, including a directory of the activities and programmes of its members. For details, apply to its Coordinator, Dr David Geffen, P.O.Box 7855, Jerusalem.

That this roof organisation so quickly attracted such a broad membership and recognition is a sign of hope, since it shows that recent hostilities and tensions have not weakened the will and the felt need of all people of faith in Israel to work together for better interreligious relations. At the same time, the existence of the ICCI enables its member institutions, like the Fraternity, to concentrate all the more on their specific vocations.

Yours Fraternally,

Rev Petra Heldt (Executive Secretary)