

ECUMENICAL Theological Research FRATERNITY in Israel

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

NEWSLETTER NO. 27 December 2001

Dear Friends,

At the end of the year 2001 we recognize that the seemingly overwhelming discontinuity in our Christian presence in Jerusalem is in fact of less impact than that of the elements of continuity. On the one hand, many institutions dedicated to Jewish-Christian relations and the study of Judaism have been muted, with personnel changes in its wake. These elements of discontinuity are still showing their effects. In this atmosphere of instability, we are grateful to say that on the other hand, the Fraternity continues to be widely-supported and continuing strongly according to its vocation. We are thankful for all the encouragement and tangible support for both the academic and social endeavours given to the Fraternity during the last year. We hope that in the coming year, the Fraternity will be able to continue to give guidance in the ecumenical scene both in and from Jerusalem.

ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

The Fraternity Series 2001/2002

The holiday season lecture on December 20 was given by Prof. Pesach Schindler: "Fatal Theologies that Misshaped Community: Restoration of Zion as a Response to the Holocaust." Prof. Schindler, a senior professor at the Hebrew University, has done extensive research for his book entitled *Yissakhar Shlomo Teichthal: Em Habanim Semehah; Restoration of Zion as a Response During the Holocaust* (Hoboken: KTAV, 2001). The martyred Rabbi Teichtal composed *Em Habanim Semehah* in hiding during the early 1940s in Budapest. It broke with ultra-Orthodox anti-Zionist theology and argued for the legitimacy of a more active involvement with the process of redemption. The evening's question: Was this an inspiration for shaping Jewish communal identity today?

Special Lectures

*Rev. Petra Heldt was invited to give a lecture with the title "Concepts of Identity in Early Patristic Exegesis" at the Swedish Theological Institute on Thursday December 6.

*At the Mishkenot Sha'ananim on December 20: Rabbi Ehud Bandel (President of the Masorti Movement in Israel) and Prof. Mustapha Abu-Sway (Al-Quds University) engaged in dialogue on the topic, "Jihad and War of Obligation: When is War Justified?"

CHARITABLE SERVICES

The Fraternity Sick Fund

May we share with you the letter of gratitude received from the Syrian Orthodox father nearly blinded in both eyes: To the donors who gave a great help in the sad days I have been through. Thank you very much for your help and may God be upon you and give you the strength to keep helping people who need it.

Donations

This past month, several packages of clothing and useful goods were received for the needy Christian community from Studium in Israel and Lifegate. Sincere thanks to Rev. Wilfried Bullinger for his kind gift; to the Church community of Neu-Westend Berlin for their thoughtful support when dedicating part of the income of the Advent-bazaar to the support of the Ecumenical Fraternity; and to the Dom-Gemeinde in Luebeck for their continuous financial commitment towards our work. We are also grateful to a variety of Churches in Germany who have given substantial contributions. Thank you for making this Christmas a special one!

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CHURCH ACTIVITIES

Christmas Services

Christians here are committed to sharing the spirit of Christmas and maintaining the status quo, including all of its Christmas services as usual. By their presence, Christians contribute encouragement to the peoples of the whole region.

Solidarity Mission

We welcome the solidarity mission from the UK, supported by the Church of England, arriving in time for the Orthodox Christmas and participating in the celebrations with the Orthodox Churches in Bethlehem.

Week of Prayer

Of utmost importance particularly at this time: The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2002 will take place from Sunday January 20-27.

FRATERNITY COMMUNITY NEWS

Swedish Theological Institute

As of January 1, 2002 the STI will not plan any activities for an undetermined length of time. The decision was made on November 21 and announced to the Rector Rev. Tord Fornberg and the Administrator Mrs. Gunnel Fornberg the following week. Appreciated by both Jews and Christians alike, the closure of the 50-year-old institution has caused much disappointment in the Jerusalem community.

The Jerusalem University College

The slowdown of students coming to the country has led the Board of the JUC to cancel its second semester this year. It is hoped that studies will resume in the future.

Visitors

A special envoy of the Archbishop of Canterbury - Canon Andrew White accompanied by the

Honourable Thomas Kay-Shuttleworth visited the region for a peace mission aided by the Fraternity (17-21.12); Fuerst zu Castell invited all of his German friends of Israel for a special Christmas treat at the King David Hotel.

Student Christian Forum

The Christmas party at Canon Bill Broughton's residence certainly inspired the group to celebrate the Lord of the season, with thankfulness for such a wonderful meal and time of reflection on joyful moments of the past year.

Holiday Events

*The annual Hanukkah reception held at the Jerusalem City Hall on December 6 was attended this year by a majority of Orthodox representatives including the Greek Orthodox Patriarch His Beatitude Ireneos I.

*A wonderful Christmas concert on Saturday December 22 at the Redeemer Church featured Jerusalem organist Elizabeth Roloff.

*The New Year's reception at the President's residence in honour of the heads of the Christian communities in Israel is to be held at the end of December.

Holiday Interviews

Since many pilgrims cannot come to the Holy Land, broadcasting authorities from several countries are eager to deliver a Christmas message from the Land. We were blessed with many interviews all over the world, passing on the message of peace and reconciliation, and the faith in the God who became man so that man could become God.

Members

We welcomed Rev. Ingrid Homann on December 18. It is good to have you back in Jerusalem!

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"Corresponding Membership" December additions:

Rev. Albrecht Hauser (Germany); Rev. Betty Gamble (USA); Fr. Ottone Cantore (Kenya).

PUBLICATIONS

In Loving Memory

The homiletic reflections at the memorial service held in honour of the late Fr. Johannes Alois Duesing are now available at the Fraternity offices for a minimal donation.

Books Received

Generous donors have once again provided us with valuable volumes including: *Memory and History in Christianity and Judaism*, edited by Michael A. Signer (University of Notre Dame Press, 2001); Volumes I-III entitled, *Against Silence. The Voice and Vision of Elie Wiesel*. Selected and edited by Irving Abrahamson (Holocaust Library: New York, 1985).

A Holiday Greeting

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and good will among men with whom he is pleased!" Thus rang the chorus sung by the heavenly host witnessing His Birth - in a lowly setting, his very existence threatened-acknowledging from the very beginning His relationship to the Creator and the nature of his aspirations: To deliver peace to mankind so loved by the Father. May we remember at this time the goodwill of our Lord toward his Creation and continue to trust Him who so loved the world that He gave His only Son.

Yours with warm Christmas Greetings!

Rev. Petra Heldt