SCHNELLER
MAGAZINE ON CHRISTIAN LIFE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

EVS Evangelical Association for the Schneller Schools

1/2025

Christian Presence in the Middle East

Challenges
Concerns
Perspectives

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Cover picture: A girl in the kindergarten at the Theodor Schneller School in Amman. (EMS/Buck)
Back cover: Entrance gate to a church in Shaqlava, northern Iraq.
(Katja Dorothea Buck)

Dear Reader,

the Middle East is going through a period of historical upheaval. The cards are being reshuffled everywhere you look – and the outcomes are uncertain. Minorities are facing extremely challenging crises, wars and times of widespread uncertainty. For over twenty years, the Schneller Magazine has focussed on Christian life in the Middle East. Never before have the reports been as depressing as they are now.

Fears and worries about the future are troubling Christians and other minorities, whether they live in Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Iraq, Jordan or Israel. When will the time come to give up everything and seek a new beginning in calmer waters for themselves and future generations? What are the arguments in favour of staying despite all odds? Above all, there is the overriding question of what role minorities should be allowed to play in a society.

We have asked Christians from Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Israel, Syria and Iraq to tell us about the current situation in their countries. This issue contains remarkable reports and incisive analyses. We would like to thank all the authors for sharing their concerns and thoughts with us.

There is less news from Schneller work this time, but more personal reports instead. Firstly, the two new volunteers write about how they are getting on at the Theodor Schneller School. Secondly, Mr and Mrs Rutishauser-Winkler from Switzerland tell us how they met more than fifty years ago at the Johann Ludwig Schneller School in Lebanon and why they have remained faithful to the schools for over half a century.

We again received a lot of feedback about the previous issue. It is encouraging for an editorial team to see how intensively readers respond to the content in our magazine. We are very grateful for your support of the Schneller magazine and of Schneller work in general.

Many greetings on behalf of the editorial team.
Best regards,

Katja Dorothea Buck

Double-crossed

Have you ever been really double-crossed? Yes, that hurts! There you are, squirming like a fish out of water. Too trusting, too weak, too gullible, not streetwise enough.

Nearly every time I hear this saying, I think of Jesus. He let himself be nailed to the cross on Good Friday – he was betrayed, helpless and paid the price for his good faith. So far, so bad. Obviously, Jesus fits easily into the ranks of idealists who are "too good for this world' and fail because of the cruelty of life.

Just take a look around us today. The law of the clenched fist, violence and terror raises its ugly head. This applies especially to the Middle East. So much suffering, so many tears, so much hatred, so much pain – it simply leaves me speechless. And to be honest, I don't see much that gives me hope.

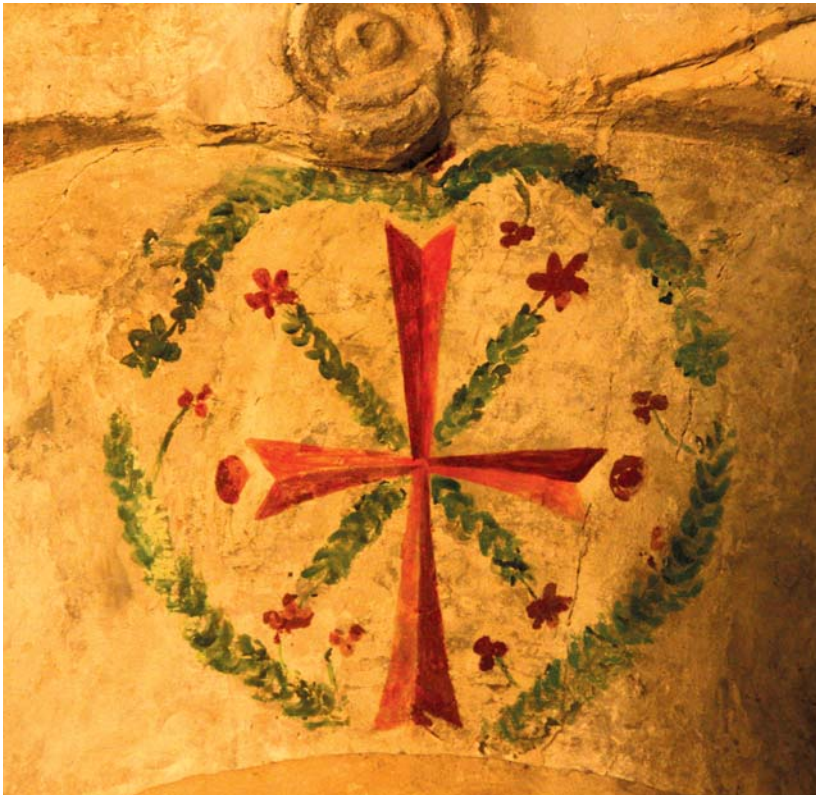
But before I give up, let me take a closer look. Can we be so sure that we really understand the suffering and death of Jesus? And then I compare the view of defeat I just described from a completely different perspective: "For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." (1 Corinthians 1:18).

Of course, our so-called common sense rebels at this. Am I supposed to lie down on the cross all meek and mild? Am I supposed to believe that something good can really come from the tragedy on Golgotha? If you ask me, yes, you should believe it; yes, you can trust that Jesus' death creates a new reality that totally transforms the world.

At the end of time, it would be absolutely intolerable if terrorists and the perpetrators of violence, the schemers, the ruthless, the ultra-tough guys, the super-egoists, the swindlers, the traffickers and the con artists were proved to be right! Life would then be nothing more than a war of "every man (or woman) for himself or herself".

Although this may look so convincing at first glance, in the end it does not stand up to the reality of life. Violence only begets more violence, and hatred does not breed life. I need only look at myself. Yes, there have been intense moments in my life when I thought I could take on the whole world single-handed. But the older I get, the more I realise I am not always strong. I can't do everything on my own! And by the way, neither can YOU! We are not always the winners. We don't have all the answers. Don't let yourself be conned by those who live by the motto that in the end this only makes us lonelier and more thick-skinned!

Since Jesus' death on Golgotha, we have a new motto: Jesus clears the way to God and to mankind. His innocent death holds an almost unbelievable power – the power of "FOR YOU"! When people stop thinking only of themselves, forces are released that bring new life! Jesus' death gives life because ONE FOR ALL, ONE FOR EVER let himself be nailed to the cross. Since then, I can "definitely" trust that God loves me, that he forgives me my



The cross on the capstone of the Syriac Monastery in Wadi Natroun, Egypt, is surrounded by flowers and fresh greenery – a symbol of the cross and resurrection.

guilt, my human failings, my fantasies of omnipotence, that I am not alone in my victories or in my suffering, that he helps me to carry my cross...

And this new perspective changes my life. Over and over again! Every time I am at the end of my tether, when I don't know what to do, I hear a voice inside me saying: "Trust in the power of two hearts! Join your heart, your courage and your despair with the heart and the power of this God. Don't let the fist win. Open your own hand and offer it to those who apparently only know the rule of the fist."

There is no panacea, no quick or naive solutions for the political, social and religious crises of our time, including the seemingly intractable crises in the Middle East. But I am convinced that we as Christians have to keep on mentioning precisely this perspective of "for you". Those who trust in the "word of the cross" may experience how much vitality and hope lies hidden in the words "for you". What in German we call "Karfreitag" is called Good Friday in English. And it truly was a good Friday!

Dr. Michael Diener is Dean of the Protestant Church in Germersheim and member of the EKD Council. He is also chairman of the Protestant Commission on the Middle East (EMOK).

Celebrating services together despite all differences

Ecumenism in practice in a parish in Amman

Christians from Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Palestine, the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada come together in the Anglican St. Paul's parish in Amman. Despite their differences, they all feel they are part of the family of Christ in worship and diaconal service.

These people with completely different church backgrounds – Anglican, Syrian Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Armenian, Assyrian, Coptic and Chaldean – meet in our parish. They join in worship, meet for Bible studies, in women's meetings, Sunday school or in youth groups, enriching and supporting each other. Many of them have fled from religious extremism or wars in their homelands.

These people with all their rich and diverse backgrounds make it possible to be a family of Christ. They are reminiscent of the historic Madaba Map mosaic which is located less than 40 kilometres away from us. (Editor's note: The 6th century Madaba Map is considered to be the oldest original preserved cartographic representation of Palestine on both sides of the Jordan and Lower Egypt and shows many historical sites of Christianity.) St Paul's reflects a harmonious Christian community the way it should be everywhere in the Middle East.

It is amazing how all these different people found their way to live in Ashrafieh, a suburb of Amman that was once known as "Christian". It is still full of churches today. Christians in the Middle East love to live in the shadow of churches because they feel blessed and protected and there, they are ready to serve God.

The major challenge that these people face is the sad situation of war in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria and the uncertainties in Iraq and the whole region.

The continuous wars in our region make Christians think more and more of emigrating. Iraqi and Syrian refugees are longing to get their visas to relocate to one of the western countries. Egyptians face difficulties finding jobs and legal status in Jordan. The whole of Jordan is suffering from the economic situation that has deteriorated since the wars in Gaza and Lebanon. Unfortunately, many young people have already made plans to emigrate in order to find a better future. elsewhere.

Our Church chooses to show compassion and mercy to all of these people and is trying to help them. We strengthen their faith, encourage their spiritual lives,

Rev. George Kopti and his wife at the entrance to St Paul's Church.

They all come to services at St Paul's, regardless of the country and church tradition they come from.

lead them in prayer and show them how to trust God. Moreover, we find ways to help them practically, for example finding their children schools to attend, feeding the hungry, comforting the traumatised and caring for the wounded and sick.

Refugees need opportunities to improve their abilities and discover their talents. Therefore, a centre was set up to help refugee children and adults learn English, Arabic, art and music

It is good that other churches in the area are also trying to help all these people It is necessary to encourage ecumenical efforts to better serve the diverse Christian community.

Our Church of St Paul is only a tiny part of the Christian community in the Middle East. I hope and pray that their wishes and dreams are fulfilled, that they have the opportunity to lead a better life and be true witnesses to the love of Christ, wherever they are called to be.

Rev. Canon George Jabra Al-Kopti has been leading the Anglican St. Paul's Church in Ashrafieh, Amman for almost twelve years.

Christian presence in the Middle East

percentage of the total population

EGYPT	IRAQ	ISRAEL	JORDAN	LEBANON	PALESTINE	SYRIA
111 Mio	42 Mio	9 Mio	11,2 Mio	5,4 Mio	5,5 Mio	24 Mio
10%	**1%**	**2%**	**2%**	**32%**	**1%**	**2%**

Waking up from a nightmare

Hope is slowly growing again in Lebanon

Christians in Lebanon are just as affected as the Muslims by the developments in their own country and by what is happening in neighboring countries. Despite all the challenges, they now have hope that things will calm down and that humanity will regain the upper hand.

I started this article and ended up having to rewrite it four times. Why? The first version was so sad and angry because of the recent war that Lebanon had to go through with Israel. But then every day there were new rays of hope.

When I started writing at the end of last year, we had no president in Lebanon. The economic hardship could not have been worse. The war had destroyed many areas. The prices of almost everything needed to live were rising dramatically. The Lebanese currency had lost more than 95 percent of its value. And the economy was in decline. Corruption had driven many companies to ruin. People were losing their jobs, leading to severe crises for individuals and families. Apart from that, the Beirut port explosion in August 2020 and the takeover of private deposits by the banks had led to Lebanese youth going abroad more and more. During this time, many Lebanese lost faith in their future and gave up on their dreams.

„Lebanon is more than a country: it is a message." Pope John II visited Lebanon in 1989. At that time, the country had just emerged from a 15 year long civil war.

We have found our dreams again

Then God answered our prayers. At the beginning of the year, parliament elected Joseph Aoun, the former Lebanese military commander, as president. After more than two years, Lebanon once again had a president who, according to the constitution, must be a Christian. Hope for positive change grew among the Lebanese, especially among us Christians. The first decisions were made. We have found our dreams again; we have regained our human rights!

Certainly, justice has not yet become a reality. The poor and the rich are in a similar situation: the banks don't even provide us with a full bank statement. We have no idea whether the savings we have in our accounts have been reduced or robbed. But now we have at least been promised that the problem will be solved, and soon.

Corrupt politicians should be brought to justice. They have led our country into this crisis. The judges who were previous-

Katja Dorothea Buck (2)

Sunset on the Corniche in Beirut – a genuine glimmer of light in dark times.

ly prevented from playing their role in the corruption investigations are back on their feet and have the freedom to apply the law and ensure justice.

What have the churches done to help people in this crisis? During the economic crisis, the explosion in the port of Beirut and the war between Israel and Hezbollah, our churches prayed incessantly and asked people to believe in miracles. We not only prayed for Lebanon, but we addressed words of peace to the whole world, virtually begging God to give wisdom to leaders around the world to end the war and wake us up from this nightmare.

Keeping an eye on the people

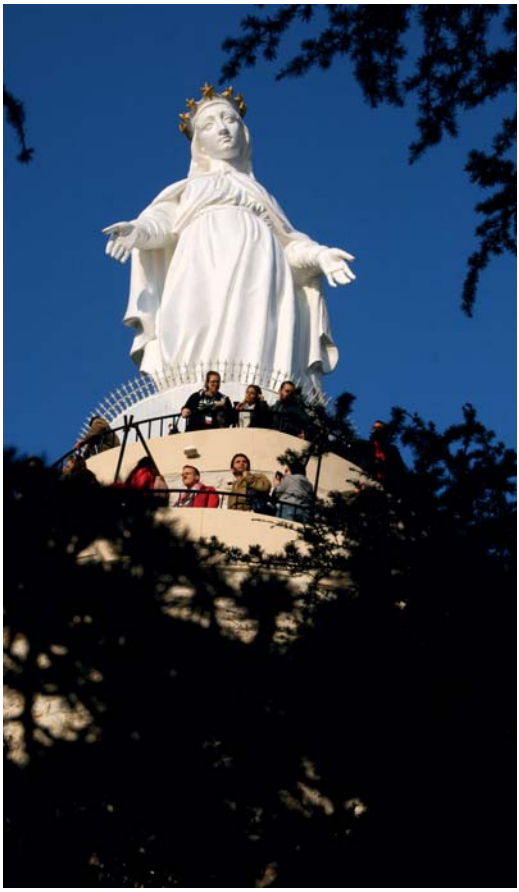
The Lebanese churches tried to keep an eye on the people. They distributed food aid, encouraged the youth to stay in their country and almost became psychologists for all the family conflicts that had arisen due to the unbearable burden.

It was and still is not easy to call on the God of love, this amazing God who asks us to love and embrace our enemies. Sermons on such topics were very important: How can we love those who harm us? Who is actually our enemy? Does he always come from outside? Such questions are challenging and lead to conflicts, even among Christian leaders. Nevertheless, the awareness of love has not ceased.

War should not and must not hinder our faith. However, it is a dilemma to convince those who are directly affected by the war, who have lost family members, their homes, their land or their jobs, that

they should seek out their enemies and love them instead of killing, hating or rejecting them.

The war in Syria and the change of political power in Damascus have had both positive and negative effects on Lebanon. Many Syrians who fled to Lebanon to escape the Assad regime have returned home, but not the Christians among them. They are still not sure whether this is a good thing, as there are repeated anti-Christian incidents in Syria, such as the burning of a Christmas tree in a village. Signs have also been put up in some places asking all women to wear headscarves and not to walk around like the "infidels", by which they mean Christians. Thousands of Christian families therefore continue to stay in Lebanon, sometimes even illegally. They are competing with the Lebanese for jobs. However, our new leadership has promised solutions and is working with the new political leadership in Syria to ensure that all Syrians can safely return to their country.



Our Lady of Harissa watches over Lebanon.

No one wants division, everyone wants unity

Lebanon thrives on its interfaith relations. There have always been wars in this country. But that hasn't stopped us from picking ourselves up again and again and hoping for better days. We have always lived together, no matter what religion we belong to. We have always been able to say: let's sit around a table and talk about it.

The language of religious leaders has changed for the better: No one wants division, everyone wants unity. The round tables are back. Many organizations want to acknowledge past mistakes in dialogue and accept each other's presence, want to deal openly with each other's political thoughts and feelings and reconcile. Non-governmental organizations such as ADYAN or the Forum for Development, Culture and Dialogue (representatives of both organizations have already written articles on this subject in previous issues of Schneller Magazine, editor's note) are doing their best to address the challenges

and negative language and translate them into joint documents on commitments and change.

Activities such as the distribution of food are carried out on an interfaith basis. No questions are asked about the religious background. Churches and mosques invite people to joint educational events about each other and about our common humanity. There are joint prayers and interviews that are published online and on television.

A lot is changing around the world right now. Many political leaders are negatively influencing developments in the Middle East, Africa and many other countries. But we still have our faith! Our Savior will not leave us. That was and is his promise to us. We have left him, gone astray and allowed ourselves to be led by fear for our daily bread. God has told us that our path will be narrow and tight. But he has also promised us that he will be by our side, no matter what happens.

The Christians in Lebanon now have a more positive outlook on the future. We can see that people are trying to invest in their country again. We can see how promises and pledges are opening doors to recovery. The road we are traveling is still tough. But it has a promising destination.

Becoming true mediators of peace

We need prayers from all over the world to overcome evil. The norms of humanity must be re-evaluated. Revenge or political and economic interests must not be the reason to kill others. One should not take sides in a conflict, but listen to both sides and try to become a mediator for peace, a true mediator who does not exclude any group or individual.

Please try to get to know the other in a conflict. This will help all of us, especially us Christians in the Middle East, to find our true status and role. Justice should be the honest motto of every political group.

We Christians in Lebanon are affected by everything that is happening in our country and in the whole region. But we now have hope that things will calm down and humanity will prevail again. We pray for this every day. The challenges are far from over. We have to rebuild our country. But our Lord is taking us by the hand so that we can go our way safely and wisely.

Please continue to ask for us, visit us, reach out to us so that we can rebuild this country together, and pray for mercy and justice for you and for us.

Linda Macktaby is a pastor at the National Evangelical Church of Beirut to which Johann Ludwig Schneller School belongs. She is also the coordinator of the Adyan Foundation's Religious Affairs Committee. She has been organizing emergency and development aid on a voluntary basis for many years. In her recently founded association "GLOW", she is committed to the participation of women and people with disabilities.

Between nightmare and hope for the future

A female pastor reports on the situation in north-eastern Syria

Syria's future is shrouded in fog. The situation is particularly hard for the Christians, who are only a very small minority. They lack real advocates both inside and outside the country. What's more, there are also power struggles among the Christians themselves.

The services in the Presbyterian Church of al-Hassakeh are usually very well attended.

It was dawn on December 8 when the door to our house began to shake with a heavy knock. A group of soldiers from the Syrian army wanted to hide in our house out of fear. They had their weapons with them. My husband and I live with our twin daughters in a building together with three other Muslim families. The fact that the soldiers came to us for help was completely unexpected. And then we suddenly heard the news from Damascus that al-Assad had abandoned everything and fled to Russia with all the country's money and gold.

It was a confusing morning; the emotions were hard to get a grip on. Thoughts about what the future would bring were like a torrent. I need to say a few words about my personal role and position. I serve a Presbyterian congregation in an area where the Syrian Democratic Forces SDF (see info p. 16) are in control. The region here in northeastern Syria has been divided between these forces and the old Syrian government for the past twelve years. But on this Sunday morning, everything was suddenly under Kurdish control.

Pastor Mathilde Sabbagh breaks the bread with her congregation during communion.

It was the second Sunday in Advent. We usually light the candle of peace on. The

Sabbagh (2)

people in my congregation had questions. What does peace mean? What can we expect from our prayers? I spoke to them via WhatsApp and found out that they couldn't come to church because of the shootings. Nevertheless, I went to the service there and started praying alone with my husband. Six people from the neighborhood joined us. One woman had tears in her eyes because her two children are studying at university in Damascus. She was afraid for them because the Islamist rebel group Hai'at Tahrir ash-Sham (HTS) had taken over the capital.

On the one hand, people were happy that 14 years of uninterrupted fear, anger, hunger, unemployment and being torn apart by flight had come to an end. On the other hand, however, the mantra of previous al-Assad supporters could also be heard: "Al-Assad or we burn the country down". You have to realize this: After the fall and flight of Bashar al-Assad, it is not the general protest movement against him that is now ruling, but an Islamist current that people (Christians and Muslims) do not trust. Many cannot accept it and do not want to live under it.

The current Syrian leadership is not able to integrate all the different Islamist forces into a single army, to unite them in one faith, one vision and one hope. In recent weeks, there have been several cases of HTS people walking around Christian neighborhoods calling for conversion to Islam. They also distributed the full black veil for women.

In addition, there were many murders. Alawites were killed simply because they belong to the same denomination as al-Assad. Old scores have been settled and thefts continue to occur. Syria's future is uncertain and nebulous. There is no constitution that defines the laws and guarantees the protection of citizens.

Unfortunately, Syria's new leadership announces that all these crimes are only isolated incidents and are not fundamentally directed against Christians and Alawites. But it is not preventing them either and is clearly not really in control.

The Christians are trying to find ways to get out of this "nightmare". Even though many Christians have worked as employees in government offices for a

Wikimedia Commons/Beltramz

The cathedral of the Assyrian Church of the East in al-Hassakeh dates back to the 1960s and is the largest church building in the town alongside the Chaldean church.

modest salary, most of them were not supporters of the old regime. At the same time, they also reject the "Idlibization" of Syria. This refers to the reconstruction of the entire country on the basis of Idlib, the previous stronghold of the HTS, where everyday life and society are strictly Islamic.

Life has come to a standstill. Most churches are struggling to help. Our small Presbyterian church is trying to help by distributing cash, food and hygiene products. But this is never enough to alleviate the overwhelming need.

In addition, representatives of the Suryoye Military Council, whose members belong to the Syrian Orthodox Church, are coming into Christian schools, making their language, Aramaic, compulsory and wanting to appoint their own people to the school administration. If the Military Council continues to impose its methods and curricula, Christians of other denominations, such as Catholics and us Protestants, will disappear altogether. If they continue like this, Christians will no longer find good schools for their children. That will be the moment when everyone will leave forever.

Christians are experiencing the hardship of having all sides against them and receiving very little support in these dark times. The church is the only hope to remain steadfast. But what can the church do when its children abandon it? What can the church do for them when evil forces oppose their vision and mission to give people the hope through education that is needed for this country to rise again from the ashes?

Mathilde Sabbagh is a pastor of the National Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Al-Hassakeh/Syria.

Syria: Upheaval and insecurity

Various forces are active in Syria and have been fighting against each other or with each other against others in recent years. The coalitions vary depending on the region. This often depends on which ethnic group or religious community is in the majority in the respective region. This text reports on the situation in north-eastern Syria, where Kurds predominate. The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) have been in control of most parts of this region in recent years. The SDF is a coalition of various Kurdish militias, Sunni Arab rebel groups and Christian militias such as the Suryoye Military Council, which is mainly made up of men from the Syrian Orthodox Church.

The SDF coalition was previously supported by the USA. For a long time, its main opponent was the Islamic State. However, the SDF was also repeatedly involved in violent clashes with government troops loyal to al-Assad. In mid-March, the SDF agreed with the new interim president in Damascus, Ahmed al-Sharaa, to integrate into the new Syrian military. However, the political arm of the SDF, the Syrian Democratic Council, vehemently rejected the draft constitution presented a few days later because it would grant the country's president excessive powers, which would ultimately jeopardize the rights of the Kurds and other ethnic groups and religious communities.

"The mood in the city is close to breaking point. Anger, insecurity and resentment are growing," writes Mathilde Sabbagh shortly before the magazine went to press at the end of March. What's more, 25,000 students at universities in Kurdish-controlled areas are not allowed to take their final exams because there are still no agreements with the Ministry of Education in Damascus as to whether the Kurdish curricula will be accepted at all. The students could take their exams at other universities in Syria. "But many families cannot afford this as it means paying enrolment fees, travel and accommodation for their children," says Mathilde Sabbagh.

Abd Alrhman Al Darra

February 2025: The flag of the new leaders flies at the entrance to a village.

Katja Dorothea Buck

Sustaining a vital community

Threats to the Christian presence in Jerusalem and the West Bank

The Christian community in Jerusalem and the West Bank has a heritage stretching back 2000 years. However, the community faces challenges that threaten their future in the land of their forefathers. After the last 500 days of destruction in Gaza and beyond, these challenges have become existential.

The Palestinian Christian community in Jerusalem and the West Bank has a heritage stretching back to the very origins of Christianity. Despite their small numbers of about 50,000 (approximately 1% of the total population), Palestinian Christians contribute uniquely to the social, cultural and spiritual fabric of the Holy Land through their church educational institutions and healthcare facilities, serving both Christian and non-Christian communities alike. However, they face significant challenges, political, economic and social.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has long affected Palestinian Christians, including those in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Movement restrictions imposed through checkpoints, permits and the separation barrier limit access to holy sites, work opportunities and essential services., especially in the health sector. These restrictions have only increased during the past 16 months of the war as Israel has added many additional checkpoints throughout the West Bank.

The Palestinian economy suffers from high unemployment, poverty and limited economic growth due to occupation-related constraints. The current war has increased unemployment significantly, with most Palestinians in the West

Bank losing the permits required to work in Jerusalem and a lack of tourism devastating local economic centres, particularly in Bethlehem.

Palestinian Christians, like their Muslim neighbours, struggle to find job opportunities, which prompts many to emigrate in search of stability and a better future. Emigration remains one of the greatest challenges, with many young educated Palestinian Christians leaving for the Americas, Europe or Australia. This weakens local Christian institutions and

Katja Dorothea Buck

results in a shrinking ageing Christian population. Since 7 October 2023, many more Christian families have left the country.

Recognising the decline of the Christian community as an urgent issue, local churches, church-related organisations and international organisations have initiated various strategies to support Palestinian Christians and encourage them to remain in the land of their heritage. Churches, particularly through ecumenical partnerships, provide essential social services, including education, healthcare and housing assistance aimed at reducing the pressures on the community. Local Christian leaders and international religious organisations continuously advocate for the right of Palestinian Christians to access holy sites, especially in Jerusalem.

In addition, several international and local initiatives have focused on strengthening the Palestinian economy in order to reduce emigration. Christian leaders worldwide have increasingly raised awareness of the struggles facing Palestinian Christians, fostering solidarity with them. This advocacy is crucial in supporting the survival of our community.

The Christian community in Jerusalem and the West Bank, despite its small numbers, embodies a legacy of resilience, faith and compassion. However, they face substantial challenges that threaten their continued presence in the land of their forefathers. After the last 500 days of destruction in Gaza and beyond, these challenges have become existential. To support the local Christians in the Holy Land, we invite you to visit the Holy Land and meet the living stones rather than the dead stones.

Bassem Thabet is a Palestinian Christian in Jerusalem and Managing Director at the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land.

The Stone of Anointing in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem – a place of remembrance and pilgrimage for Christians from all over the world, but also and especially for Palestinian Christians. This is where Jesus' body was anointed after his removal from the cross.

Frequently ignored officially

Non-Arab Christians in Israel

Besides the Christian residents, there are many people living in Israel who have a different ID card. This includes Messianic Jews and Moslem converts, many of whom have joined Evangelical communities. Many have a different view of things than Arab Christians. But they pray together for peace and reconciliation.

Officially, the Christian population of Israel now stands at 187,000 or 1.9 per cent of the total population. Yet this figure is incomplete as it does not include 30,000 Messianic Jews, Moslem converts, international permanent residents, refugees or all the guest workers who are also Christians. And there is a larger group comprised of those who have the term "no religion" written on their ID cards. This population numbers about 300,000 and consists largely of immigrants from the former Soviet Union who have Jewish heritage but are not fully Jewish. About half of this group would identify with one Christian community or another.

It is estimated that there are actually about 400,000 Christians living in Israel, though half this number does not appear in official statistics. Perhaps this is why non-Arab Christian groups are frequently ignored in discussions and studies of Christians in the Holy Land even though they represent a very dynamic and creative stream in Israel and make a positive contribution to society, working in social programs, hospitals, old age homes and helping the poor.

Like everyone else, the Christian communities have been impacted by the tragedies since 7 October. Many Christians depend upon tourism for their livelihood and the war has brought financial disaster to tour guides and agents, hoteliers, restaurants and others. Their sons and daughters (except most Christian Arabs) do national service, including the military. At the height of the war, Yad Hashmona (a Messianic Jewish moshav near Jerusalem) had thirty members ranging from ages 18-40 serving in the army. Other congregations had similar numbers. Tragically, believers have been killed and others seriously wounded.

While serving in the military may be controversial outside Israel, the various Messianic communities in Israel are virtually united in seeing the need to defend their families and country against a vicious Islamic Jihad. On the other hand, Arab Protestant Evangelicals (many are Israeli citizens) have conflicting feelings about the war. Most see the necessity for Israel to defend its people from a brutal and aggressive ideology which represents a clear danger to their own community's future. And while they have an appreciation for the setback faced by Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran, they especially long for a reconciliation between Israel and the Palestinian people.

But it should be no surprise that most of the Messianic and Evangelical communities believe the Gaza war to be justified, even though many think that it should have ended earlier. Equally, there has also been widespread opposition to the gov-

WikiCommons/Bahnfrend

Both Christian and Jewish festivals are celebrated in the Christ Church at the Jaffa Gate in Jerusalem.

ernment's attempts to "reform" the legal system and many of Netanyahu's policies.

Yet during this time of crisis and uncertainty, most Israeli believers have been able to escape the curse of our region's tribalism as they attempt to live out the Ephesians 2 vision of "one new man". They are sponsoring seminars to help Arab and Jewish teachers address the trauma experienced by their young students; they are providing food and medical services for West Bank Bedouins; they are helping those addicted to alcohol and drugs; they are providing Christian lawyers (Jewish and Arab) to assist the needy in navigating the bureaucracy; and they are providing scholarships to universities and technical schools for both Jews and Arabs whose family situations cannot help them.

Fifteen months ago, not long after the war began, a group of Christian leaders from various communities met to pray. It was a time of public confession, repentance and intercession, crying to the Lord to intervene in the catastrophe. Since then, there has been a constant outpouring of prayer amongst Christian communities in the Holy Land for peace and reconciliation and the hope that God would use the current situation to turn what the enemy meant for evil into a blessing for our region. Please join us in this prayer.

Rev. David Pileggi is Rector of the Anglican Christ Church at the Jaffa Gate.

For them, there is no other homeland

The situation and future of Christians in Iraq

The Middle East stands out for its ethnic and religious diversity. What happened in Iraq 20 years ago could now be happening in Syria. For Christians, the outlook would then be bleak. Twenty years after the fall of Saddam Hussein, the situation for Iraqi Christians and other minorities still gives cause for concern.

Political instability, wars and crises and the lack of consensus on the concept of citizenship make life difficult for everyone in the Middle East. Religious minorities such as Christians are the ones who suffer the most from this. This is not only leading to their diminishing numbers but also to the gradual decline of their role in society and politics and a growing collective feeling of a blocked future horizon. Those who have stayed so far have not only persevered despite the existing conditions in their home countries, but because they have a feeling of belonging in their home countries and have their roots there. For them, there is no other homeland. Or to put it in other words, a diaspora remains a diaspora as long as a homeland exists.

The political developments and fluctuations in the region are marked by the rise of political Islam in its various forms and orientations, including jihadist and takfiri movements (Editor's note: taktir is Arabic and means "labelling others as infidels"). Iraq has introduced a system of governance, institutions and legislation based on religious discrimination and state entrenchment of the dhimmi status of Iraq's Christians and other non-Muslim religions, including Yazidis, Mandeans and others. (Editor's note: "dhimma" is the legal status of a non-Muslim "protected person" living in an Islamic state. De facto, dhimmis are second-class citizens.)

Members of minorities in particular face numerous existential challenges. The Iraqi state is well aware of demographic changes, encroachments on land and property and real representation in state institutions, but chooses not to respond or show any intention of change. There are other issues that are no less important.

Second-class citizens

The paramount issue is how to make visible and define the presence of minorities, their historical affiliation to Iraq and the civilisational role that they are to play in it. Iraqi Christians and other religious minorities suffer from legislation, practices and cultural and societal atmospheres that reinforce the view of them as dhimmis and second-class citizens. They are absent from education curricula. The fact

Katja Dorothea Buck (2)

Chaldean service in Dohuk The fact that the church is still so full does not mean that Christianity in Iraq is on the rise again.

A cross marks the end of the railing in front of the large Mar Mattai monastery. The future of Christians in Iraq is uncertain.

is that Iraqi minorities lived in Iraq long before the country was Islamised and Arabised,

Iraqi curricula for all school levels lack any kind of introduction to the history of minorities. This creates generations that know nothing about the people who belong to Iraq just as much as they do. If you know nothing about another person, you will not consider him or her as an equal partner. This is how Iraqi curricula erases minorities from the collective memory.

What applies to curricula in schools also applies to public spaces and institutions, e.g. schools, hospitals, streets, etc. which do not reflect Iraq's diversity, but rather reinforce the religious identity.

Islamisation of the state and society

The Islamisation of the state includes broad areas covering the state's legislative, administrative and economic system. Meanwhile, the law stipulates that minors of non-Muslim families automatically become Muslims if one parent converts to Islam. This law not only reinforces discrimination but also causes significant familial and societal disruptions with hundreds of reported cases.

Katja Dorothea Buck

A few years ago, the import, production and sale of alcoholic beverages was banned on the basis of the Islamic legal system of Sharia. This particularly affects non-Muslim minorities, thousands of whom made a living from working in this sector. In the first five months after the law came into force, losses were estimated at $12 million. In addition, the ban on alcohol has led many to turn to other drugs.

In the workplace and in public life as a whole, non-Muslim minorities are experiencing an Islamisation that is becoming increasingly oppressive. They no longer feel accepted by the majority society. Politically and socially, Islam has gained in importance as a frame of reference throughout the region. In addition, Shiites and Sunnis strongly disassociate themselves from each other and fight for dominance in public opinion and in the state. This takes place in the media and other platforms and contributes to the fact that all individual and collective areas of life are determined by an Islamic environment.

Christian property sold illegally

In addition, the state has failed to protect personal property. Thousands of properties and houses owned by Iraqi Christians who emigrated have been sold illegally using forged documents. This has led to a growing loss of confidence among Christians and fewer and fewer opportunities for the Christian diaspora to invest economically in Iraq. These property violations pose a real threat to the Christian presence in Iraq. In the Nineveh Plains, one of the main areas of Christian settlement in Iraq, this is systematically and fundamentally changing the demographic structure of the population. Assyrian villages in the Kurdistan region are also affected.

Yet Iraqi Christians still see themselves as part of Iraqi society despite everything and cling to the hope that there will come a time when there is a state based on equality and justice that guarantees the individual and collective dignity of all.

Young Christian women in Alqosh. The town in the Nineveh Plain is one of the few places that is still almost entirely Christian.

What they do not want is a police state or a Sharia state. They would much rather see a state in which all citizens have equal rights. This option is shared by a growing base of intellectual, academic and political elites and by a moderate Islamic base. They recognise that the country can accommodate everyone and that Iraq is better off when everyone is involved. Moreover, everyone has come to realise that the contemporary world is a small village where everyone shares the same challenges and opportunities and that universal values for human and minority rights apply to everyone.

A state with equal citizens

The adoption by European states of the standard of human rights and the rights of women and minorities in their foreign policies is no less important than internal factors for building a state with equal citizenship.

The Iraqi experience after 2003 is almost repeating itself in Syria which has liberated itself from a police state. The Syrians are now longing for a state of equal citizens. But just as in Iraq twenty years ago, the fears that later became reality also seem to be repeating themselves in Syria. After the collapse of the state, sectarian conflicts erupted and non-Muslim minorities were persecuted.

Unfortunately, there are many indications that the scales are tipping towards fear, between the justified hopes of the Syrian people and the fears of a Sharia state that has no respect for diversity. The Syrian elite must bear this in mind and correct the course of the Syrian state before it transforms itself into a state that expels its own people.

Emanuel Youkhana is Archimandrite of the Assyrian Church of the East and serves as the head of the aid organisation "Christian Aid Program North Iraq" (CAPNI) based in Dohuk.

“For me, she was sent from heaven”

A special 50-year Schneller anniversary

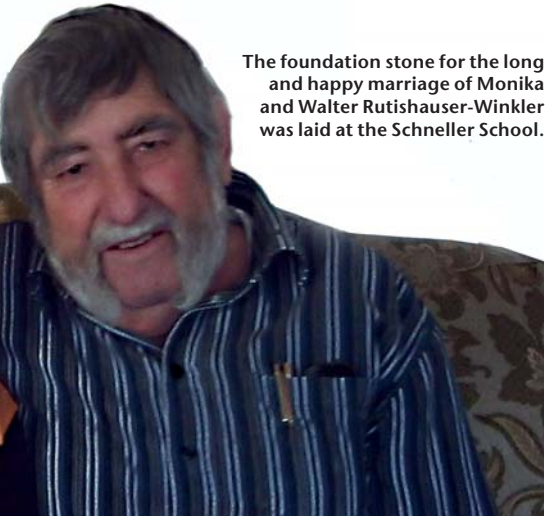
It was 50 years ago since Monika and Walter Rutishauser-Winkler met at the Johann Ludwig Schneller School (JLSS). They recently celebrated their golden wedding anniversary. They have remained faithful to Schneller’s work all these years and now want to express their gratitude.

What should we call it: coincidence, fate or God’s providence? Monika Winkler’s story: After working as a child carer for the Dapp family and as a nurse at the Diak Clinic in Schwäbisch Hall, I wanted to work with children again. Hans Ulrich Dapp, who had recently passed away, had told me about the Schneller School in Lebanon. I went there in autumn 1972, took over Family 3 consisting of 26 boys and helped in the infirmary. It was a happy time for me with so many affectionate children.

Walter Rutishauser’s story: Since I had been saved from some bad accidents as a young teacher, I wanted to dedicate my work to the service of God. However, I was not needed in Africa. So I landed at Khirbet Kanafar in the spring of 1973 and was called “Brother Walter Rutishauser”. My job was to be a “deputy (arif)” for the younger and older children who were only a little younger than myself. This meant I was always in charge when an educator has a day off. When it was necessary, I also acted as a teacher.

We really got to know each other on hikes and outings together and fell in love despite the twelve-year age difference. We announced our engagement of the First Sunday of Advent in 1973. We continued to work hard until the summer of 1974. We were married at the Swiss embassy in Beirut. One day later – we were on holiday duty – we took little Toni to the seaside. He was the only one who couldn’t go anywhere with relatives. We had just got married the day before and we were already travelling with a boy that day! We thought it was great fun. An it was Toni’s first time at the seaside. We almost felt like parents.

Our honeymoon took us to Jerusalem and back again several days later, both times overland via Syria and Jordan and finally over the Allenby Bridge with all the experiences that go with it. When we were crossing the border to Syria, the Syrian official discovered that Monika’s new Swiss passport was missing an entry from Lebanon. It was in the German passport together with the residence permit (carte de séjour). He asked me where this woman came from. My honest answer was, “For me, she was sent from heaven!” He let us pass simply because he was powerless against the forces of heaven.



The foundation stone for the long and happy marriage of Monika and Walter Rutishauser-Winkler was laid at the Schneller School.

privat (2)

In 1974, the Schneller-Bote reported on the newlyweds. The picture shows them on the train that took them from Beirut to Zahle.

Back in Switzerland, we continued to support the important work of the Schneller schools in the Middle East. Walter: While Monika worked in the background and kept my back free, I was secretary of the Swiss Association for the Schneller Schools for about 25 years. As liaison officer I also attended the Executive Committee meetings of the German Schneller Association (EVS) and served two terms as a synod member of the Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS). This meant I was always travelling to the Middle East and visiting the schools.

I held many lectures in church parishes in Switzerland and Germany and collected donations; for example, we had stands at fairs where I conducted my religious classes. As a result of my activities at their Advent bazaar, the Sisterhood of Salem in Bern gave us a very large donation for the schools.

Twenty-five years ago, we visited Lebanon and the JLSS with our two children. Actually, they are also "Schneller children" because, if it hadn't been for the school, they would not exist. Our alumni who worked there greeted them like siblings. "Sister Monika was like a mother to us," they said.

The Schneller schools have consistently led the way in the Middle East, for example, with vocational training based on German and Swiss standards consisting of more practical training than theory. This makes Schneller boys much sought-after skilled workers, moulded by additional virtues such as punctuality, precision and reliability. The Schneller schools were the first institutions to offer training and further education for educators, with a house for girls on the same premises as for the boys. They practice active Christian charity, also helping refugees, and are a role model in the reconciliation of religions and ethnic groups. This work is as important and necessary today as it was then. "Schneller" has shaped more than half of our lives and continues to influence us to this day. Thank you!

Monika und Walter Rutishauser-Winkler

Bright minds, skilled hands and many big-hearted people

An interim report by the two volunteers at the TSS

"Voluntary service in Amman... Amman? Where did you say that was again?" Carolin Taut and Julia Heuvelmann would have reacted like this or similarly if someone had told them two years ago where they would be today. Now they are experiencing many wonderful and exciting things and are getting to know friendly people and happy children.

Although we had both planned to go abroad for a while, Jordan didn't immediately spring to mind. The people in Germany are almost more surprised by our decision to come here than we are ourselves. It is usually a difficult task to explain exactly why we young women from Germany where it is so beautiful would voluntarily want to live in supposedly "boring" Jordan for ten months.

But then in the past few months, we have discovered just how exciting and diverse this country and its people really are. This is partly due to the fact that everything here is so new and exciting for us, while now Germany seems just "boring" to us. So curiosity and wanderlust don't seem only to affect us. But we have the enormous privilege that we can surrender to these feelings. And so, totally unexpectedly, we ended up on the outskirts of Amman.

We, that's Julia (23) from Düsseldorf and Carolin (18) from Kirchheim unter Teck. We have been living together at the Theodor Schneller School (TSS) for the past six months and helping out at the boarding home.

At the beginning, everything was strange and challenging. Like toddlers, we walked around the city or the school grounds wide-eyed and full of excitement to see and discover everything new. And like children, we also had to painstakingly learn quite a lot (that hasn't stopped). So the sense of achievement was and still is all the more rewarding. Things like just taking the bus, shopping or going on a trip gave us the feeling of slowly finding our feet and becoming independent and free. An despite the fact that the Arabic language still poses an enormous challenge to us.

At the beginning, working with the children was exhausting. The language and cultural barriers made it really difficult to get to know each other. But thanks to the guidance and friendly support of the teachers and the openness of the students, we also had a lot of fun. As we mainly stay in the boarding home, we only get to see a fraction of the other many activities on the school campus. There is always a lot going on here.

ÖFP ÖKUMENISCHES FREIWILLIGENPROGRAMM

ÖFP bewegt begeistert bereichert

Due to refurbishment work, there are currently only three groups living in the boarding home instead of six. We usual-

TSS

Carolin (top left) and Julia (top right) with children at the TSS. If you look closely, you can see that many children are making the sign of a small heart with their thumb and index finger.

ly spend our time with the young boys (Julia) and the girls (Carolin). When the children come back from school, lunch is served in all the groups. After that, they play and when the weather is fine, we all go to the playground together for an hour. We particularly enjoy this time, firstly because going on the swings and playing tag or football are great opportunities to have fun with the children. And secondly, we also see each other and the children from the other groups. After that, it's homework time. We are responsible for German and English here.

As we take Arabic lessons twice a week ourselves, we understand how frustrating learning a foreign language can be for the children and that they can't remember everything straight away. The wide range of learning levels are challenging because some children have been at the Schneller School longer than others.

Since February, we have been in the newly refurbished rooms with new doors, windows, lights, bathrooms and, to everyone's delight, air conditioning! The weather is still quite cold at the moment, but it gets really hot in summer. So both the heating and cooling functions will be needed.

Many things have been kept for practical reasons, such as the patterned tiled floors. During our first few months, we realised that trends and tastes are not the same everywhere. This not only applies to food, but also to music and aesthetic preferences. Some priorities are also defined differently. For example, we appreciate the open friendliness of many people and the slightly less efficiency-oriented way of thinking, which also allows for being late by a few minutes and for spontaneity.

In a region whose culture and diversity is often overshadowed by bad news, we see and experience an incredible amount of

beauty and inspiration: colourful streets, delicious food, warm-hearted people, an incredible language, breathtaking countryside and wonderful sunsets every day. For, besides all the conflicts and tensions, the Middle East is full of clever minds, skilled hands and big-hearted people.

Although, or perhaps because, Jordan is not a typical country for volunteer service, we are very happy to be here and to have these unique experiences. Of course, we are also very happy to have a job at the TSS that challenges us but does not overwhelm us.

Julia Heuvelmann und Carolin Taut have been working as volunteers at the TSS in Amman since September last year as part of the Ecumenical Youth Volunteers Programme of the Evangelical Mission in Solidarity.

The Ecumenical Youth Volunteers Programme

Do you want to help students with their homework in Jordan? Or help out at a college of agriculture in Japan? Or maybe support children with disabilities in South Africa and help them advance?

The Ecumenical Youth Volunteers Programme (EYVP) of the Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS) offers young people aged between 18 and 28 the opportunity to work as volunteers abroad. This is how ecumenical learning is put into practice in a spirit of solidarity. Volunteers work in the social institutions of EMS member churches for a period of 10 to 12 months, gaining valuable intercultural experience. They are immersed in a totally different culture and become more aware of global issues.

People have been volunteering with the EYVP ever since the early 1990s. They are supported and accompanied by a team of full-time and volunteer staff, as well as by attendance at seminars and training courses offered. The EMS is a recognised placement organisation for the German development volunteer service "weltwärts" – a funding programme of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

The EMS Fellowship hopes that the intercultural, ecumenical and overseas development experiences gained by volunteers during their service will have a lasting impact on them and, after they finish their service, that it will inspire them to become involved in global issues at the society level as well as within the EMS Fellowship.

Web: ems-online.org/mitmachen/oefp

One-on-one tutoring brings success

Amman (TSS). The Theodor Schneller School (TSS) in Amman reports a small success story. During the last academic year, a ten-year-old girl came to the TSS. She had significant learning deficits in reading, writing and arithmetic due to a lack of oxygen at birth. Since her classmates were much further ahead in their studies, Sandy often felt frustrated and lacked self-confidence. Her mother reported that she had become increasingly withdrawn at her previous school.

At the TSS, the girl received one-on-one tutoring that aimed at building her strengths and providing positive learning experiences in her problem subjects by using innovative and personalised teaching methods. Sandy has made remarkable progress over the course of the academic year. Her reading skills improved and she gained confidence in basic arithmetic.

She has become an enthusiastic and articulate student, with a passion for reading and she is a source of inspiration in the classroom. "Sandy's journey serves as an inspiration to many children facing similar challenges, showing that they can achieve success with the right support and determination," writes Rev. Khaled Freij, Director of the TSS.

New tools for the carpentry workshop

Khirbet Kanafar (EVS). The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Wuerttemberg has donated €23,000 to the Johann Ludwig Schneller School (JLSS) in Lebanon to purchase new tools for the carpentry workshop's training centre. The carpentry workshop was broken into last autumn and the thieves took all the tools and many of the machines.

"We hope that our share of the financing will help restore the carpentry workshop's ability to function by purchasing new tools," said a spokesperson for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Wuerttemberg. On behalf of the JLSS, the EVS would like to express its sincere thanks for the generous donation

The EVS at the Kirchentag in Hanover

Stuttgart/Hannover (EVS). The Evangelical Association for the Schneller Schools (EVS) will be represented at the Kirchentag in Hanover (30 April to 4 May) with a stand in the "Global Challenges – One World" section of the "Marketplace of Opportunities" in Hall 5.

We look forward to having a chat with you about Lebanon and Jordan over a cup of Arabic coffee or tea. You can also take part in a quiz to test your knowledge of the two countries. We will also be conducting short interviews at the stand with interesting guests. So we look forward to welcoming as many of you as possible. Bring your friends and relatives and spread the word about the EVS stand to others.

Letters to the editor

I first heard of the Theodor Schneller School at Easter 1975. As a teacher at the German School in Beirut (1974-1976), we used your building in Amman as a base for our first trip to Jordan. Of course, this was followed later by a visit to Khirbet Kanafar. Your magazine is a source of positive news for me about the region known collectively as 'Palestine', that is, beyond the current power and state borders. It is truly a unique selling point!

At the same time, you do not sugarcoat what is objectively regarded as evil. You give space to different perspectives, thus providing a platform for interreligious dialogue. The EMS is firmly established on my list of donations to support and promote this. Mrs Buck, your book review of Rashid Khalidi is proof of this.

Horst-Rainer Nies, senior teacher retired, Singen-Hohentwiel

I wanted to thank you for your newsletter, the (former) "Schneller Messenger". I think it is always highly interesting and up-to-date, especially in the choice of topics. Real questions are discussed (even if I don't always agree with every "point of view".

Gottfried Spangenberg, Königsfeld

For years, we have been reading the Schneller Magazine with great interest and pleasure. We would like to express our special thanks for the last issue dealing with the sensitive and moving topic of "Dealing with trauma". The contributions allow authentic and committed voices from different contexts and perspectives to have their say. Even if these voices conflict with one another, the desire for an end to violence, for healing, and the hope for peace and a life in dignity for all can be felt in all of them. Only in this way can we learn to understand the pain of others (Charlotte Wiedemann), whoever they are. The Schneller magazine opens up a safe platform to express empathy combined with the vision of a just peace in the region.

Bernhard and Margarete Dinkelaker

This Schneller magazine (4-2024) and the earlier ones impressed me very much. Thank you for the well-founded and empathetic articles. Unfortunately, these articles are necessary. Despite many submissions and letters, especially from the Kairos Palestine Network, our regional church and the EKD have not reacted and are not reacting appropriately to the situation of the Palestinian people, especially our Christian brothers and sisters, which, as a church member, saddens me very much.

Our regional church and the EKD are guided more by the controversial principle of "reasons of state" than by naming the cause of the conflict (Nakba 1948) and the current behaviour of the Israeli government: the illegal occupation of Palestinian territory with military and settler violence, and the nonsensical attempt to destroy terrorism with bombs and military force, which, however, results in immeasurable suffering and destruction.

Herbert Babel, Ludwigsburg

Regarding the article 'The feeling of not being seen as a human being…' by Sarah El-Bulbeisi in SM 4/2024

I find it very appropriate to be able to read an entire issue on the psychological background of the continued violence in the "Middle East'" This also applies to the ar-

ticle by Mrs Sarah El-Bulbeisi. In principle, I have at least been able see once again that Palestinian life, among other things is traumatised, in mourning, proud, silent and angry...

In the Schneller Schools magazine, I would have liked to have seen a more differentiated presentation of the Palestinian trauma issue. I also missed a reference to the many Palestinian-Israeli groups that work together on the traumas ("Combatants for Peace", "Standing together", etc.). Finally, however, some considerable doubts remain about the view presented here. In my opinion, Palestinians are presented far too one-sidedly as victims. Their suffering is not seen enough in the context of the reciprocal Israeli-Arab aggression since 1945.

Furthermore, I see a process of development in both the Israeli (since around 1880) and the Palestinian nations (since around 1947). The Shoa and the Nakba are "merely" especially frightening and traumatising aspects of this. Neither of these nations is a "consequence" of Nazi power and violence. Even though the latter is misused, e.g. as "justification" for Israeli violence or was used in early Arab anti-Semitism, e.g. by the Jerusalem mufti Al-Husseini (1941), etc.

In general, I observe, among other things, a kind of demonisation in Germany, as well as an equally inappropriate idealisation of "the" Palestinians. Accordingly, I have experienced the proclaimed general victimisation among my contacts with Palestinians here in Flensburg. Unfortunately, as in the article here, the Israeli violence in the occupied territories, as in the current wars, is condemned unilaterally. No mention is made of either the massacre on 7 October 2023 or the continued terrorist assaults and rocket attacks against Israelis by Palestinians.

The now 70-year history of mutual violence between these two nations primarily needs cooperation, also in view of the traumas, the diverse views of history and the possibilities of peaceful conflict resolution and coexistence.

Christoph Touché, Flensburg

The editors wish to express their thanks

It is well known that there are different points of view on the Middle East conflict. But since the Hamas massacre on 7 October 2023 and the subsequent war between Israel and Hamas and Hezbollah, the differences have become increasingly clear.

In the Schneller Magazine, we do not shy away from the resulting debates. We intend to face them and continue to engage in constructive dialogue with all those who care about peace between Israelis and Palestinians. Your letters give us food for thought to reflect on complex issues jointly and from new standpoints.

Farewell to Abu Farid

On 3 December 2020, we received the sad news that Ghazi Musharbash had passed away in Amman at the age of 81.

Abu Farid, as he was usually known, was Director of the Theodor Schneller School in Jordan for five years from 2008 to 2013. There was hardly another director who had as many good connections as he did: in the Jordanian Parliament (he was a member of parliament for a long time), in industry (he was a chemicals manufacturer by trade), on the boards of governors of numerous schools, in the refugee work of the Middle East Council of Churches, in the cross-border environmental protection organisation "Friends of the Earth – Middle East", in the Rotary Club or in numerous other areas of society.

Ghazi Musharbash

He leaves many a mark behind him. And he always considered how the Schneller work could benefit from all this. After all, he had a lifelong connection with the school – ever since he was born in Beit Jala (Palestine) in May 1943 and attended the school in Bethlehem, which was initially called the "Schneller School" after the closure of the Syrian Orphanage in Jerusalem.

We join in mourning with his wife Salwa, his brothers and sisters, children and grandchildren. At the same time, we are certain that Abu Farid is now in the safe hands of God and can see there what he believed in. The Evangelical Association for the Schneller Schools (EVS) will hold him in the highest regard and honour his memory.

Rev. Dr. Uwe Gräbe,
Executive Secretary of the EVS

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SCHNELLER

MAGAZINE ON CHRISTIAN LIFE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.

Isaiah 43:19

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