



## Living together – but how?

Israel/Palestine: unfamiliar perspectives, rarely heard voices

## ■ ISRAEL/PALESTINE

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**Dear Reader,**

After our “country booklets” on Syria (3/2018), Lebanon (4/2020), Armenia (1/2021) and Jordan (2/2021), this issue is all about Israel and Palestine. Some might first think of violence and human rights violations. There are certainly many such incidents, as shown by recent developments in the Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah or the banning of six Palestinian organisations. Nevertheless, and especially in the face of this desolate situation, we wanted to know what our authors had to say about the question: How can you (still) imagine living together in the future?



One can only be humbled by a voice like that of Professor Mohammed Dajani Daoudi from Jerusalem, who, despite everything, clings on to the goal of two independent states living together, pointing out, however, that everyone must address the traumas of the other side. We also collected opinions that make a stronger connection between reconciliation and justice, such as John Munayer. Others, like Shadi Khaloul, strive to integrate their non-Jewish community into the Jewish state. And then there are others who have long practised togetherness, like the Israeli children's home Neve Hanna, whose approach to the education of Jewish and Muslim-Bedouin children is very similar to the Christian-Muslim network of relationships in our Schneller schools.

Two of our authors take a different approach and explore the relationship of the churches to Israel-Palestine. Tobias Kriener, Director of Studies at the Christian Meeting and Learning Centre Nes Ammim, writes about Protestant relations with the Holy Land. The former Israeli ambassador to the Vatican, Mordechai Lewy, reports on diplomatic incidents which are otherwise rarely revealed.

As always, this issue also deals with the work of the Schneller Schools and the international EMS Fellowship.

Our editorial team wishes you a blessed festive season. Stay safe – and may this issue be a stimulating read for you as this year draws to a close and the new year begins.

Best regards,

Uwe Gräbe

## We are merely stewards, not owners

Each year on the first Sunday in October, the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem celebrates Thanksgiving or Harvest Sunday. It's a beautiful morning of worship where the church altars around our diocese are decorated with many fruits of the autumn harvest. It is also a time when we recognize the end of the creation cycle and are reminded of our need to care for the creation that has been entrusted to us, especially since this always falls on the date of the Feast of St. Francis, whose life sets an example that is still relevant today.

Of course, many cultures across the northern hemisphere celebrate such harvest festivals during the autumn months. And in even the most secular of these, there is at least some sentiment of thank-

*Everything comes from you,  
and we have given you only  
what comes from your hand.*

*(1 Chron 29:14b)*

fulness expressed over the great bounty that the harvest brings. Television and radio announcers in these countries can often be heard to say, "There is truly much for which we should be thankful."

There is, however, usually one thing left unsaid: To whom is it that we should express our thanks? For it is not enough to simply have a feeling of thankfulness. To

be thankful means that someone has given us something of value. Out of gratitude, we then go on to express our thanks to the one who has given us the gift.

In the Church there is no such ambiguity about who it is we must give our thanks to. It is the Almighty, the Creator of all things. As the common liturgical chant during the offertory at Holy Mass puts it, "All things come of thee, O Lord, and of thine own have we given thee" (1 Chron 29:14b).

And so, on Thanksgiving Sunday, when we decorate our altars with the fruits of the harvest, these gifts remind us of God's gracious providence towards us – of the Lord's many blessings bestowed upon us throughout the year. Upon seeing this great bounty, we in turn give God our thanks.

But for Christians especially, God's great benevolence inspires us to go beyond mere verbal expressions of thanksgiving, as important as these are. They also inspire to give as we have received. And this is indeed our calling. As Jesus himself once proclaimed, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35b).

Here, there are many in the world facing hardship and need, both physically and spiritually. To them, Christians are called to give from their abundance, and to do so with joy, knowing that we are showing forth the love of Christ when we do so—"for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor 9:7b).

Yet we must give not only with joy, but with all our heart. This means giving sacrificially, as Christ himself gave his life for



Archbishop Hosam Naoum blesses the Thanksgiving altar in St George's Cathedral in Jerusalem.

us, calling us also to take up our crosses. Here, we must remember the widow who gave not just a tiny fraction out of any abundance, as the others in the temple were doing, “but her whole living” (Mark 12:44). She gave sacrificially. By doing so, she earned our Lord’s praise.

And so, during these months when many of us will be enjoying the fruits of the autumn harvest, let this great bounty remind us of these several callings. While the world often calls us to buy more for ourselves and our own self-gratification, this leads only to selfishness and narcissism.

Leading a life of thanksgiving is the perfect antidote to these spiritual afflictions.

For when we express our thanks to God, we acknowledge that everything indeed comes from God. We are merely stewards, not owners.

From this humble position, we are then able to more readily share from the abundance of the gifts we have received, offering relief to those who are in the midst

*God loves a cheerful giver.*

*(2 Cor 9:7b)*

of difficult times and making intentional efforts to be good stewards of the creation that has been entrusted into our care. Then, the very knowledge that we have been able to help a needy brother and sister, and to lovingly tend to the earthly garden within which we all live and breathe – these things will in turn become for us a far greater blessing than any material possession can ever be.

*Dr Hosam E. Naoum is Archbishop of the Episcopal Diocese in Jerusalem and the Middle East, to which the Theodor Schneller School in Amman also belongs.*

## Living together – but how?!

Fading visions of the future, bitter realities and stalemated debates

Actually, it's a very simple question: How do you want to live together? But there are no simple answers to this question in Israel and Palestine. Nevertheless, this question must be asked over and over again. And those who answer it must be listened to. Otherwise, peace has no chance.

What remains when all seemingly reasonable paths to peace have been blocked? For decades, a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine, both inside and outside that little corner of the world between the Mediterranean and Jordan, has been invoked by everyone who seemed to have any common sense in this debate. But what happens when the solution to the problem is merely paid lip service, while in practice nothing, absolutely nothing, is done to ever implement it – or in fact quite the opposite: while a great deal is done to make it permanently impossible? After decades of the Israelis building new settlements, a territorially even remotely cohesive Palestinian state seems hardly possible. The „green line“ has long since disappeared from Israeli maps. On the other hand, I have never seen a map of Palestine consisting of only the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

If there really is no other way than to live together somehow – what could such a coexistence look like? Five years ago, the writer Nir Baram travelled through the West Bank. He came across meeting places

After decades of the Israelis building new settlements, a cohesive Palestinian state seems hardly possible. The photo shows the Shilo settlement.



where deeply religious Muslims and Jewish settlers embrace each other and seek to live together on the basis of the Torah and Sharia, combined with a touch of esotericism. For Baram, a form of possible future coexistence was emerging here. This approach is not entirely far removed from the position of the former Israeli politician Reuven Rivlin, who as President (2014-2021) always opposed a division of the country, but at the same time envisaged a high degree of equality for Palestinians.

One might ask whether all those who have already written off the coexistence of two independent states would be really prepared to embrace such models which assume an Israeli dominance in a common state, whether expressed explicitly or implicitly. Or whether it might not be more fruitful, for example, to take a closer look at the thoughts of those who, despite everything, still cling on to mutual recognition in two states.

Beyond such debates, a whole generation of Palestinian theologians has been working since the mid-1980s on theologi-



cal concepts that are intended to strengthen the resilience of their communities in geopolitical debates. In the meantime, the tone here has become much harsher; categories from current post-colonialism debates are being applied to the modern state of Israel. And this in turn disconcerts those who simply see Zionism as the national movement of the Jewish people – often knowing full well that every national movement carries within it the potential for liberation as well as ruthless nationalism. Is there still any room for dialogue in such a situation? This would be necessary – for who would benefit if Palestinians (and friends of Palestine) only talked to anti-Zionist Jews, and Israelis (and friends of Israel) only talked to pro-Zionist Arabs and their friends and supporters?

In Germany, too, the debate has become irreconcilable. It is never just about the Middle East, but always about its own history. While some complain that the space for critical debate is being increasingly shrinking, others point out that hardly any other topic is discussed pub-

licly with such vehemence as that of Israel and Palestine. Are both sides still able to listen to the voices that do not conform to their own world view?

This issue of Schneller Magazine is an attempt to serve as a platform to opposing and perhaps unusual perspectives. Those who take a multi-sided approach are demanding a great deal of themselves. But in the end, it is the people between the Mediterranean and the Jordan who somehow have to live with each other, not their supporters in Europe. This is precisely why it is worth listening carefully when some of the ones directly affected formulate answers to the question: “Living together – but how!?”

*Uwe Gräbe*

## A mirror image of discord

### Protestant relationships with the Holy Land

**It is understandable that Protestant Christians have a very keen historical interest in the Holy Land. But it will be difficult for anyone travelling to Israel and Palestine to avoid having to grapple with the current situation. There are no easy answers. This is why it would be useful if the Protestant churches in Germany would make more of an effort to address the issue.**

**H**oly is the name given to the land that mainly comprises the present-day State of Israel and the West Bank which it occupies. To a large extent, this is where the history related in the Bible takes place – the history of the people of Israel and their son Jesus. It is only natural then that Protestant Christians visit the country to get a clearer picture of its history.

However, there are two reasons why the interest of Protestant Christians from Germany runs even deeper. Firstly, there is the relationship with local Christians of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL). This was originally established by students of the Syrian Orphanage and the Talita Kumi Girls' Home, which was founded in 1851 and is today one of the most well-known schools in the Palestinian territories. The difficult situation of Protestant Palestinians who have to coexist under an Israeli occupation and in a Muslim majority society demands our compassion and our sympathy, not only in a socio-charitable sense, but also from an eminently theological viewpoint since Palestinian the-

ology within its context confronts us with questions that we must ask ourselves as ecumenical brothers and sisters.

Here I refer in particular to the ideology of Religious Zionism. Bezalel Smotrich of the Religious Zionism party recently put this in a nutshell when he said to Ahmad Tibi, Palestinian Member of Parliament in the Knesset:

“So Ahmad, a true Muslim must know that the land of Israel belongs to the Jewish people, and in the long run Arabs like you who do not recognise that will not stay here. We will make sure of that.”

This mammoth threat is the result of theological developments in the national-religious “yeshivot” over the past fifty years. We hardly hear anything about these Jewish religious schools. Jewish settlers in the occupied territories, on the other hand, put this threat into practice every day and terrorise the Palestinian population. Those involved in Christian-Jewish dialogue in Germany should urgently pay more attention of this trend in Judaism. It is increasingly shaping the thinking of ultra-Orthodox Jews who are actually anti-Zionist historically. The secular public in Israel, on the other hand, cannot counter this trend with its own understanding of Judaism.



Committed to Jewish-Arab dialog





Nes Ammim

relationship between Christians and Jews and bring this to life through projects in the State of Israel. Here are three examples:

Since 1961, “Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedensdienste” (Action Reconciliation/Service For Peace) has been sending volunteers to work mainly in social institutions and in historical and political education. Or Nes Ammim, a Christian settlement in the north of Israel, where volunteers mainly from Germany and the Netherlands have been running a hotel for Israelis and international tour groups since 1963. A study programme helps them learn about the different aspects of the country of Israel and the Palestinian territories. In addition, Nes Ammim supports local dialogue projects between Jews and Palestinians.

Since 1961: the Christian settlement of Nes Ammim.

As a meaningful initiative, I could imagine working together with Palestinian Christians to develop a kind of “theology of sumud” (Arabic for standing firm) based on the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount. A practical example of this is the so-called “Tent of Nations”. Under the motto “We refuse to be enemies”, the Nassar family on their farm near Bethlehem tries to stand firm in the face of the pressure of the Jewish settlements and build bridges to the Israeli side. International volunteers help with agricultural work and offer protection from attacks by settlers.

The other approach to this land is through compassion and sympathy with the Jews who sought to establish a refuge from anti-Semitism by building the state of Israel. The late awakening of Protestant theology in Germany after the attempted “Final Solution” led to the emergence of several initiatives that strive to foster the

And since 1978, “Study in Israel” has been sending Protestant theology students for a year of study at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. When they return, the graduates are multipliers for a fundamental conversion and renewal of Christian theology in relation to Judaism.

Many threads come together in the congregation of the German Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Jerusalem, which is housed in the same building as the ELCJHL. This is where project participants and co-workers on both sides meet, exchange ideas and discuss with each other. From what I have seen, there is a great deal of interest and understanding by the people living in the country for the concerns and problems on the “other side”.

However, in Germany, the bloody conflict between Israelis and Palestinians has repeatedly led to bitter clashes between their sympathisers on either side. Some

keywords: First Intifada 1987 onwards; Women's World Day of Prayer 1994; Second Intifada 2000 onwards; "Kairos" paper of Palestinian Christians; BDS Movement.

Various commissions of the EKD, UEK and VELKD have dealt with the theological challenges for decades. The last document prepared by the "Church and Judaism" Joint Committee in 2012 bore the title: "Gelobtes Land? Land und Staat

Israel in der Diskussion. Eine Orientierungshilfe". (*"Promised Land?" Land and State of Israel in Discussion. An Orientation Guide* [only in German]) It underlines the "consensus on the lasting bond between Christians and Israel as God's chosen people (...), respects the Jewish identity

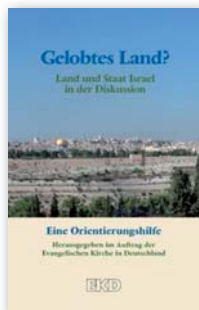
and affirms the right of the State of Israel to exist". At the same time, it "takes into account the strong bond between the churches and Israel and Palestine, and their responsibility for all people living in the Middle East – be they Jews, Christians or Muslims".

Many projects and groups involved in the Middle East exchange ideas in the Protestant Middle East Commission (EMOK). The main purpose of this forum is to maintain the thread of dialogue, despite diverging assessments of developments in the Middle East, and to search for common ground on the basis of faith. In 2009, EMOK published a paper entitled "Israel-Palästina. Eine Positionsbestimmung der EMOK" (Israel-Palestine. A Position Statement of EMOK). It concludes

with the following statement: "It is possible to have a supportive commitment only for Israelis or only for Palestinians. EMOK is in favour of dialogue and therefore calls on all Christians involved in the Middle East to be constantly aware of and respect the other side. But what is more important is a continuing commitment that has a constructive effect on both sides and has a mediatory, unifying and reconciliatory effect. Peace can only be achieved if the other side experiences peace, normality and progress."

What might such a continuing commitment entail? There are many projects and initiatives on both sides that are committed to dialogue and encounter. Their support is largely uncontroversial among EMOK member organisations, such as "Tent of Nations", Hand in Hand schools, Neve Shalom/Wahat el-Salam or the Nes Ammim Center of Learning and Dialogue for Peace. Human rights organisations that document Israel's human rights violations, such as Rabbis for Human Rights, B'Tselem, Yesh Din, Breaking the Silence, Shalom Ahshav, Ta'ayush and many others, are less conducive for reaching a consensus. They are considered enemies of the state by the State of Israel, and this also makes them questionable among Israel's partisans in Germany.

It would therefore be sensible for EMOK to compile the work of these human rights groups as well as the work of groups documenting human rights violations by the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. On the other hand, EMOK should lobby for support for these groups.



Texts of the EMOK can be found on the website of the EKD: [www.ekd.de/emok](http://www.ekd.de/emok)



And finally, I could imagine it would be extremely helpful to work on the issue of so-called Israel-related anti-Semitism.

In particular, the BDS movement (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) and the Kairos paper of the Palestinian churches to which it refers are accused of originating from anti-Semitic motives and pursuing anti-Semitic goals.

By contrast, the 2019 Bundestag resolution on BDS and the definition it contains on the anti-Semitism of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) are accused of being aimed at warding off any criticism of Israel's occupation policy. EMOK could work out what the legitimate

concerns of BDS are and at the same time clearly specify any problematic aspects without demonising Palestinian resistance against the occupation.

Such a position paper by EMOK could objectify the debate in Protestant churches in Germany between the friends of Israel and Palestine and could perhaps also lead to and (further) develop sympathy and empathy with Israel and Palestine, not as mutually exclusive but, on the contrary, as mutually dependent and mutually supportive commitments.

*Rev. Dr Tobias Kriener leads the study and dialogue work at Nes Ammim, the Christian Center of Learning and Dialogue for Peace.*

## Mediating, reconciling, building bridges: Examples

### Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam (Oasis of Freedom)

Mixed Arab-Jewish village where all decisions are made by consensus between the two strictly equal population groups. Runs, among other things, a „peace school“ for encounters between Jewish and Arab-Palestinian Israelis. <https://www.wasns.org/>

### Hand in Hand schools

A network of private schools in Israel where Jewish and Arab Palestinian children are taught by a mixed body of teachers. <https://www.handinhandk12.org/>

### Tomorrow's Women

A training programme that trains young women from Palestine and Israel to be strong, compassionate leaders who partner to resolve conflicts and inspire action that promotes equality, peace and justice for all. <https://tomorrowwomen.org/>

### Parent's Circle Families Forum

A joint Israeli-Palestinian organisation of families, all of whom have lost an immediate family member to war and terror, and who work together in many different activities. <https://www.theparentscircle.org/en/>

### Mahapach-Taghir (Revolution)

A feminist Jewish-Palestinian initiative that operates through local activism to promote social justice, solidarity and “community resilience” and has the aim of building an equal and democratic society. <https://mahapach-taghir.org/en/home/>

### “Tent of Nations”

(see article) <http://www.tentofnations.org/>

### Center of Learning and Dialogue for Peace Nes Ammim

(see article) <https://www.nesammim.de/>

## Diplomacy with heaven's help

Episodes from the service career of an Israeli ambassador to the Holy See

As one reviews the spectrum of historical relations between Judaism and the Church over the past 2,000 years, one may conclude that relations have never been as good as they are today. However, Israel and the Vatican have only entertained full diplomatic relations since 1993.

**M**y first experience as ambassador to the Holy See was in 2008, just before the official ceremony of presenting my credentials to Pope Benedict XVI. I had to submit my speech in writing in advance, which is also standard practice in some other states. Literally, it said the following: It is my hope that I can contribute to the delicate network of relations between Israel and the Holy See, relations that have only recently been established, as well as between the Jewish people and the Catholic Church.

To my astonishment, the Vatican chief of protocol warned that I could not speak on behalf of the Jewish people, as my accreditation could only apply to the State of Israel and not to the Jewish people. These Vatican caveats about not recognising Israel as representative of the Jewish people is a deliberate affront to the state founded on the Zionist idea. Since 1948, the Holy See has consistently refused to recognise Israel's sovereignty over Jerusalem. This stance is related to the Vatican's proposal to create a "corpus separatum", i.e. to assign Jerusalem neither to the Arab nor to the Jewish side in the partition of the Mandate for Palestine. By internationalising Jerusalem, the Vatican intended to

reserve for itself a say over the future of the Holy City.

When Pope Benedict visited Israel in 2009, we were keen to involve him in a joint olive tree planting with Shimon Peres in the garden of the Presidential Palace in Jerusalem. In terms of day-to-day politics, this gesture is a symbolic act of showing presence in the heart of Israel's claim to sovereignty. Theologically, it was also an invitation to reflect on the Old Covenant nourished by the root of the good olive tree and the branch grafted to it (Romans 11:17-24). Since the adoption of the Council document "Nostra Aetate" in 1965, this joint olive tree planting has been emblematic of Christian-Jewish understanding.

The Vatican doctrine of non-recognition of Israel's sovereignty over Jerusalem also produces many other diplomatic imbalances. For example, the Vatican ambassador acts as nuncio to Israel from a postal address in Jaffo-Tel Aviv. With the Palestinian Authority, on the other hand, the same person is considered an Apostolic Delegate, which is a hierarchical diplomatic rank since full diplomatic relations have not been established. In both cases, the Vatican ambassador works from East Jerusalem where he has his residence and offices. His staff must practice extreme vigilance to ensure that letters go into the right envelopes and are not sent to the wrong address, something that does happen sometimes. Annual receptions for the Israeli public, on the other hand, are held in Jaffo and not in Israel's capital. As nun-



Beginning of May 2009: Pope Benedict XVI in the Popemobile greets the crowd in the Old City of Jerusalem.

cio, however, he attends the President's New Year's reception for the diplomatic corps in Jerusalem.

On the other hand, as Israeli ambassador to the Holy See, one must also hope for heaven's help. It was on 15 October 2008 when a report was published (today I suspect the Pacelli family behind this) that during Sunday Mass in St Peter's Basilica, the Pope would announce another step towards the canonisation of a Pacelli, namely Pius XII. (*Editor's note: Pius XII was head of the Catholic Church from 1939 to 1958. According to documents known so far, he had never expressed a firm opinion or even protested about the extermination of the Jews by the National Socialists*). Accredited ambassadors routinely attend Sunday

masses and the protocol also records their absence. So, should I attend Mass and – if the rumours proved true – risk a protest by leaving? I sought convincing justification with respect to the protocol for not attending Mass. I could not possibly reveal to the protocol that I was guided by unconfirmed rumours. Thank God that this Sunday coincided with Yom Kippur. This way I could fall back on a justification that was credible even for the Vatican. If that wasn't the finger of God?

*Mordechay Lewy is a diplomat and historian. He served as Israeli ambassador to the Holy See from 2008 to 2012.*

## Wrong methods, wrong categories

Errors and omissions in peace work in the Holy Land

A sustainable and just solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict seems to be an unachievable dream. In fact, as illustrated by the recent and extremely violent episode in the month of May 2021, the situation is getting worse. For John S. Munayer, a Palestinian theologian, fundamental questions about this conflict must be posed.

Many young people in my generation are leaving the Holy Land to find better standards of living abroad. But what has gone wrong? Where has the previous generation failed? How can the young generation create a vision for all people in the Holy Land to live in a just, peaceful, secure and prosperous context?

Firstly, we ought to re-evaluate peace, dialogue and reconciliation initiatives between Palestinians and Israelis. We should question the methods and approaches of all who claim to work for peace in Palestine and Israel. Who is organising the activities? What is their goal? Where do they meet? What subjects do they cover? Many peace-building initiatives can actually be harmful and abusive for they do not recognise the imbalance of power and structural injustice in the conflict. At a recent forum that brought together around 15 peace organisations I was disappointed to find out that most of the organisations do not discuss this at all.



Who could this welcome in the desert be for? Both Palestinians and the Jordan as their home.

Moreover, a report in 2020 covering 40 peace organisations found that most initiatives focus on language exchange, technology and entrepreneurship and few of them address issues such as discrimination, racism, apartheid, occupation and inequality. 82% of organisations have an Israeli-Jewish director, and only 45% have a Palestinian director (55% had only Israeli directors and only 18% had Palestinian and 27% co-directors).

However, the focus on Palestinians and Israelis getting along on a personal level alone is not enough for the transformation of the conflict, for issues of justice also have to be addressed. It is no coincidence that this does not happen since many peace organisations are headed by Israeli directors, whereas Palestinians tend to be the ones suffering from the unjust and dis-



Uwe Gräbe

and Israelis regard the land between the Mediterranean and

criminary policies. For peace initiatives to succeed, both personal and collective issues need to be debated. The organisation Musalaha ('reconciliation' in Arabic) has an agenda that deals with these complex factors in peace-building.

Secondly, we have not been categorising the conflict accurately. If a sickness is not diagnosed properly, proper treatment cannot be given. The same applies to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In numerous circles, both in Palestine/Israel and abroad, we have described the conflict as essentially two national groups competing over one piece of the land. While this description is understandable, it fails to identify the root of the conflict as a struggle between a native population (Palestinian) and a colonial movement of settlers (Zionism). Similar to other contexts such

as South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the US, conflict arises when a European colonial settler movement seeks to establish a homeland at the expense of the native population. That is not to say that the native population does not have any responsibility in solving the conflict or in actively pursuing a peaceful and just solution. Rather, identifying this conflict as one between a native population and a colonial settler movement can assist us in understanding the political and ideological forces at play and policies/processes that maintain the conflict.

Therefore, the Israeli human rights organisation, B'Tselem, identifies the current situation in Palestine/Israel as apartheid. For Zionism wishes to maintain an Israeli majority and dominance over the Palestinian population in order to achieve a Jewish state. Not only does it help us understand current policies such as settlement expansion in Palestine, but also past events such as the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians that began in 1947, and which in many ways continues to this day. For this very reason, a solution to the conflict must include a decolonisation process.

How then should we live together? Let us begin by being critical towards the way we and others depict the conflict and the way we promote peace. If there is no justice, there will be no reconciliation. And if there is no reconciliation, justice will not solve the conflict.

*John S. Munayer is a Palestinian theologian and lectures at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.*

## Daring to look beyond the horizon

Breaking the deadlock with a vision of peace

**For a long time, many hopes for peace were linked to the two-state model. But thorny issues such as the status of Jerusalem, the right of return for refugees, and the settlement issue have fueled skepticism for years. Mohammad S. Dajani Daoudi invites us to be inspired anew by a familiar vision of the future.**

**T**he starting point must be mutual recognition of each other's sovereignty and self-determination in the Holy Land. Israel would recognize the Holy Land as the homeland of the Palestinian people and grant them national sovereignty and the right to self-determination. Palestine, in turn, would recognize the Holy Land as the homeland of the Jewish people. The Palestinians would affirm the legitimacy of Jewish historical rights in Palestine and accept a Jewish minority in an independent state of Palestine. They would acknowledge the national sovereignty and self-determination of the Jewish people, who have lived in exile and suffered persecution for more than 1900 years.

A sovereign, independent and secular state of Palestine will be established in the West Bank and Gaza Strip alongside a sovereign, independent Jewish state of Israel. The state of Palestine will be demilitarized. Freed up resources will be put into economic, scientific and technological development.

Rightfully, Jews, Christians and Muslims consider Jerusalem as their holy city. That is why the entire Old City of Jerusa-

lem, without walls and barbed wire, will be placed under the sovereignty of God – the holy authority that all sides respect. The governments, parliaments, and supreme courts of Israel and Palestine will be headquartered outside the Old City in West and East Jerusalem, respectively. Day-to-day business will be conducted by a municipality representing all Jerusalem residents.

Non-Muslims would be permitted to enter Muslim holy sites such as Al-Haram al-Sheriff and the Al-Aqsa Mosque, just as Muslims can already visit the Wailing Wall and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem today. The borders between Israel and Palestine will be permeable and will correspond to the pre-1967 borders, with mutually agreed adjustments. They will only define where Israeli and Palestinian security services operate and will not prevent Jews or Palestinians from moving freely within their historic homeland. Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza will have the right to move and work freely in Israel, just as Israelis will have the same right in an independent Palestinian state. The cornerstone for any peace negotiations will be the shared conviction that territories must not be appropriated through war.

Israelis will elect the Israeli Knesset, Palestinians their parliament. Jewish Palestinians in the state of Palestine and Arab Israelis in Israel can take dual citizenship. Jews in Palestine will individually be able to bring private and criminal matters before Israeli courts, which will judge ac-





Of the 193 member states of the United Nations, 138 (72%) have recognised Palestine as an independent state. Sometimes, as here in Ramallah, the Palestinian flag flies quite naturally alongside the flags of other countries.

according to Israeli law. They would be subject to Palestinian law only in the area of public and administrative law.

The Palestinian diaspora, displaced by the 1947-48 and 1967 wars, will be granted the right to return to Palestine. Compensation is offered to those who exercise it. The State of Israel, the Arab oil-producing countries and the international community jointly bear the cost of resettling the refugees. In contrast, the Arab states from which some Jews left and others were forced to leave after the 1948 war will compensate these Jews.

The Palestinians will be fully committed to fighting terrorism, boycotts, anti-normalization, anti-Semitism and incitement. And economic cooperation between Israel and Palestine will aim to

ensure the well-being and prosperity of both peoples. Israel and Palestine will sign a mutual security pact to ensure the security of both peoples. A joint commission would be also established to establish a peace curriculum to educate people in both countries about the history of the Jews and Palestinians and the importance and significance of the Holy Land to both communities.

If we want peace, we have to shake the foundations of this conflict. I am convinced that with creative thinking and unconventional new ideas, the conflict can be ended.

*Professor Mohammed S. Dajani Daoudi is the founder of Wasatia, a peace organization that draws on Islamic traditions of moderation, nonviolence and compromise.*

## Knowing the history of the other

About the Holocaust taboo in Palestinian society

**In 2014, Mohammed Dajani Daoudi broke a taboo with a study trip to Auschwitz for young Palestinians. He describes below why he did this and what followed.**

**W**hy do we always follow the crowd? Following in the footsteps of others gives you security, even when you realize that you're on the wrong path and heading towards the abyss. It becomes dangerous when you question the path in order to stay true to yourself, particularly that the group wouldn't leave you alone.

Like the Greek philosopher Socrates. The crowd condemned him to death for no less a crime than that he allegedly brought ruin upon the young. Yet he wanted to get the youth to think for themselves and make their own decisions Socrates wanted to open their minds. He asked them questions without giving them answers. He wanted to inspire his students to step out of the dark cave of ignorance. His „crime”, for which he was sentenced to death, was that he dared to break taboos. Going against the mentality of the crowd and telling the truth takes a lot of courage. Many others who followed his example shared his fate.

Which road should I take? Should I remain part of the crowd or separate myself from the misguided crowd? This was the

question I faced when confronted with the Holocaust taboo in Palestinian society – deciding to take Palestinian students to visit the Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland in March 2014. I had asked myself the same question before, in February 2011, when Aladin, a Jewish organization in Paris, invited me to visit Auschwitz with religious leaders. At that time, it was easier to say yes, because it was only about me.

With a youth group, however, it is something different. It's also about others, namely my students. They have grown up in a society where the Holocaust is a taboo. Palestinian education is characterized by



The gatehouse of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, viewed from inside the camp. The photograph by Polish photographer Stanisław Mucha was taken in March 1945 after the liberation of the camp.

various shades of Holocaust denial. They can manifest themselves in intolerance, prejudice, racism, bigotry, bias, and pure propaganda.

Some take the narrow-minded approach that there was no Holocaust. Others downplay the numbers of victims or accuse the Jews of inflating the numbers of victims. Many claim that the Jews exploited their tragedy while denying the tragedies of others. They deny that gas chambers ever existed, blame the Jews themselves for the Holocaust, or accuse them of exploiting the Holocaust to win international sympathy for the Jews and support for Israel.

The dominant paradigm portrays the Holocaust as the cause of the Palestinian

1948 „Nakba“ – a term used to describe the loss of national identity, the displacement of more than 800,000 refugees, and the demolition of hundreds of villages and neighborhoods. The central insight of this reading is that the Palestinian people did not inflict the Holocaust, nor were they part of it, but nevertheless paid the full price.

The question I asked myself in 2014 was: Why should I expose myself to the accusation that I am corrupting young people by teaching them the history of the Other? Why would I put myself in harm's way by teaching Palestinians about the Holocaust when the Israeli government considers it illegal to address the Nakba in the classroom? The answer was simple: I will be doing the right thing.

The trip caused a big crack in the wall. It sparked a heated debate about whether Palestinians should learn about the Holocaust. In any case, my students and I learned: The Holocaust is the tragedy of the Jewish people, but it is also the tragedy of humanity; waging a war against facts and the truth is futile and unproductive; between Nazis and Jews, negotiation and reconciliation were not an option, but for Israelis and Palestinians they are the only option. It is factually wrong, historically inaccurate, and intellectually dishonest to associate the Palestinians with the Nazis or to compare Israel with Nazi Germany. In contrast, teaching and learning about the Holocaust do not make Palestinians less nationalistic, but more humanistic.

*Mohammed S. Dajani Daoudi*



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## Children get to know each other at play

Jewish-Arab encounters at the edge of the Negev

**For forty years, the Jewish children’s home “Neve Hanna” has been cooperating with Muslim Bedouin educators to provide therapeutic and educational support for children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. At the same time, they are taught in a playful way that the “other” does not have to remain a stranger.**

Peace work at Neve Hanna began long before the actual founding of the children’s home in 1974. The founder, Hanni Ullmann, immigrated to pre-state Israel in 1929 as a young woman and helped to rescue Jewish children from Germany during the Nazi era. When Hanni took over the management of the Ahawah orphanage in Kiryat Bialik in 1956, which was originally founded in Berlin, she campaigned for young Germans to be able to do voluntary service in Israel only 15 years after the Shoa. Hanni believed that people can tear down walls when they get to know each other and communicate with each other.

This is exactly what two men from the Negev, who wanted to bring Jews and Arabs together, took with them to another place: David (Dudu) Weger, director of Neve Hanna in the predominantly Jewish city of Kiryat Gat, and Muhammad al-Krenawi, initially school director in the predominantly Muslim-Bedouin city of Rahat and later member of the school board there. Both have been involved in voluntary work for many years and they have continued this work in their retirement. As educators, Dudu and Muhammad dedicated themselves to children and

young people who are on the margins of society. Jewish girls and boys from broken families live in Neve Hanna. The children from Rahat, on the other hand, belong to the Muslim-Bedouin community, which is one of Israel’s most socially vulnerable social groups.

Yet the most valuable treasure has ultimately emerged from the challenge of introducing the issue of peaceful coexistence to a population struggling for mere existence and lacking resources. The impact of the projects is life-changing because it creates relationships that are based on respect and tolerance and that are not easily destabilised.

Forty years later, Dudu and Muhammad can say this: No matter how painful the unrest that regularly shakes the State of Israel is (most recently in May 2021), it is precisely these events that confirm that the structures introduced have created cross-generational bridges of stability that ultimately make living together possible in a unique community.

Every two weeks, young people from the children’s home meet with students from Rahat. Since 2004, Jewish and Bedouin children have come together every day at the “Path of Peace” day care centre. There is also the Jewish-Muslim-Christian theatre group that performs its own plays on the theme of peaceful coexistence in Israel and abroad with different casts. There, the limelight is placed on the children and young people and at the same time, the theatre group builds a bridge between cultures. In these projects, children and



**Jewish and Muslim-Bedouin children play together in the “Path of Peace” day care centre.**

young people get to know each other while playing: Ahmed is doing really well in goal while Ya’acov is a perfect striker. Shlomit and Fatma notice that their love of horses creates a common language that bonds them.

When politics is not involved, minors become emissaries of peace. They take their parents and siblings, their schools and neighbours on a life-changing journey of discovery.

A German volunteer said: “I was totally excited when I heard I was going to join the ‘Path of Peace’, It would mean I was going to be part of the special flagship of Neve Hanna. But the first time I entered our group room, that feeling just disappeared. The children looked at me curiously, toys were on the floor, and home-

work was being done – everything was ‘normal’. I couldn’t figure out who was Jewish and who was Bedouin. All the children were playing together or discussing loudly among themselves. At first I was disappointed that the ‘Path of Peace’ was not as spectacular as I had imagined. But after the first few months I think it is precisely this naturalness that is the key to the success of peaceful coexistence.”

*Antje C. Naujoks is a political scientist and has lived in Israel for 35 years. Almost 20 years ago, she found a niche for herself in Neve Hanna in the field of public relations.*

Weitere Informationen:  
[www.nevehanna.org](http://www.nevehanna.org)  
[www.nevehanna.de](http://www.nevehanna.de)

## Christians in Israel faced with a difficult choice

Dispute over whether Christians in the Holy Land are Arabs or Arameans

Alongside Jews and Arabs, „Arameans“ have been recognised as a separate nationality in Israel since 2014. Whereas some condemn this as an attempt to drive a wedge between Christians in the Holy Land, others understand it as the basis for the loyal coexistence of Christians and Jews in Israel.

Since 2014, members of all the old indigenous Eastern churches in Israel have been allowed by the authorities to register as „Arameans“. Shadi Khalloul is the one who achieved this decision. His family originally came from Bar‘am, a Christian village near the Lebanese border whose inhabitants were expelled by the Israeli army in 1948. Khalloul is the founder and chairman of the Israeli Christian Aramaic Association ([www.aramaic-center.com](http://www.aramaic-center.com)). He won the right for Aramean children to be driven to Jewish schools by school bus if there is only one Arab school in the area, for there is one thing Khalloul does not want to be called and that is an Arab. Therefore, he also succeeded in introducing Aramaic language teaching at primary schools; in the near future, he intends to start his own Aramaic school.

Khalloul himself served in the Israeli army and wants all Aramean young people to do so too. He organises Christian-Jewish youth camps that prepare for military service. And he has even bigger visions. He



EMS/Gräbe

is planning to build the first Aramean city in Israel not far from the ruins of Bar‘am. The project is to be called „Aram Hiram“ – named after the king of Tyre who once supplied cedar wood for Solomon’s temple.

When asked by the Schneller Magazine about his thoughts on living together in Israel, Khalloul replied in an email as follows: *„Our goal is to educate members of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch from all denominations about their Aramean roots, history, language and cultural heritage. In this way (...) we contribute to the growth of pluralistic societies in the Middle East that respect ethnic and religious diversity. Aramisation is the opposite of Arabisation. Arabisation means openness and respect for diversity, while Arabisation has proven to mean isolation and narrow-mindedness,*



**The Maronite church in Bar'am is the only building that has been restored in the village destroyed in 1953.**

*an attempt to impose one colour on all people from very different ethnic backgrounds. Our movement (...) is the path of peaceful coexistence towards integration in Israel as loyal Aramean Christian citizens.“*

The position Khalloul describes is similar to that of the Druze or Circassians, whose loyalty gives them a much more convenient position in the Jewish state than, for example, Israeli Arabs who regard themselves culturally as Palestinians. Moreover, the goal of reviving the Aramaic language is reminiscent of the beginnings of the modern Zionist movement, in which Hebrew played a similar role as an everyday language. Of course, Khalloul also provokes opposition from Israeli Arabs and Palestinians. There is talk of division, even of collaboration with the enemy. It is also clear that the Aramean

movement is diametrically opposed to those Christians who have been developing a contextual Palestinian theology for about 35 years. For them, Arabisation of the former Byzantine, Aramean or Assyrian communities in Palestine means an „incarnation“ of the Church in their society. As early as 1987, they wrote in their policy document ([www.al-liqacenter.org.ps](http://www.al-liqacenter.org.ps)):

*„Throughout the ages, the Christian community in our land has interacted with historical, social, cultural and religious circumstances (...). Today, it reaches us in its Arab identity, Palestinian structure and ecclesiastic authenticity. (...) The local church does not live outside time and space together with all the historical, geographical, social and cultural factors associated with it. It is an incarnate Church after the pattern of the Christ incarnate. Just as the Son of God came to all humanity through his incarnation, (...) so, too, are local churches called upon to carry the universal mission of Christ through their incarnation into concrete human reality – with its particular language, its particular cultural tradition, its past, its present and its future expectations.“*

Aramisation or Arabisation of Christianity? What will better serve the coexistence of Christians in Palestine and Israel with their neighbours? This will probably remain a subject of debate in future.

*Uwe Gräbe*

## Father of 68 children

An educator talks about the challenges of everyday life at a boarding home

Samer Batarseh is 43 years old. After studying education, he initially worked at the Ministry of Education and finally moved to the Theodor Schneller School (TSS) in 2011, where he was first a teacher before becoming a boarding home educator. For the past five years, he has been the „boarding home father“ to 66 children.

*You have been working at the TSS for the past ten years. What motivates you?*

I have two sources of strength. First, there is Reverend Khaled Freij who always supports me and gives me strength in my work through his kindness and his faith. Second, there are the many successes that my students have experienced. A few years ago, a boy came to us because he had big problems with his father at home. After intensive relationship work over several years, we managed to get him to move back in with his father. We still have regular contact. I am always very happy to receive his calls.

*You also have children of your own, Ilia and Danial. For the past two years, they have been living with the family at the boarding home. What is that like for you?*

I love it very much because the environment at the boarding home is the safest in the whole of Jordan. They have 66 brothers and sisters here, and I make no distinction between my 68 children. (Laughs) Ilia is now two and has so many children here who love him and enjoy looking after him. I have the feeling he also likes it here very much.



Lisa Schnotz

*What challenges have you had to face in recent years?*

In general, the most challenging task is working with parents who have little education and who cannot read or write, for example. There were two girls who came to the boarding home because their mother was unable to look after them properly and their father was a criminal. One day, their father called me crying and asked me to always take care of his daughters. Shortly after, he was back in prison and died there a few weeks later. This responsibility is undoubtedly an enormous challenge.

*How do you stay in touch with former boarding home children?*

Former boarding home children contact me mainly by mobile or simply through social media. One former pupil





For the photo, Samer Batarseh and three of “his” boys briefly took off their masks.

contacts me very often when he needs something or has some kind of problem. But he also calls me when he wants to get confirmation that what he is doing is the right thing.

*The schools in Jordan were closed for almost 18 months because of Covid. What were the challenges during this time?*

Our work continued, of course, but through different channels. In the beginning, we talked to the students on the phone and kept in touch with them through social media. Once the situation eased a bit, we visited the children and young people at home and dropped off pencils, books and other school supplies. At Christmas, we distributed gifts. After a few months, I was also able to open my office again so that family interviews could

take place with more privacy. It was especially difficult during this time for children who had neither a mobile phone nor a computer at home. Some only have one mobile phone at home for the whole family. For them, we filmed online lessons and sent the videos to the children so that they could continue learning despite the pandemic.

*What has changed in boarding school life because of the coronavirus pandemic?*

Little has changed in the daily routine or the general ambience. However, there are hygiene measures that we have to observe. The children and the teachers are tested every two weeks. There is also an obligation to wear masks in the boarding home. Our staff members are all vaccinated. But we also encourage all children and young people over the age of twelve to be vaccinated. This is being done more and more. I miss the physical contact with the children most of all. Before Covid, they liked to hug me whenever they saw me again after the weekend. That’s no longer possible and it’s a pity because the boarding home is the children’s home and they should feel safe here.

*What do you wish for the current school year and the future of the boarding home children?*

Of course I hope that the boarding home can stay open and that my children have a good school year. They should take the security of the boarding home with them into their future and be able to proudly tell of their childhood at TSS.

*Lisa Schnotz asked the questions. The interview was conducted in Arabic.*

## ... right through to our goodnight sing-songs

### Alumni reminisce

Lisa Schnotz is 22 years old. She is a student of German and political science and wants to become a teacher. From August 2018 to December 2019, she was a volunteer at the Theodor Schneller School, helping out in class in the morning and in a residential group in the afternoon.

It's not only one event that I have fond memories of. It's rather more a feeling that my routine there quickly helped me feel at home. I will probably never forget that. When I was in the bathroom in the morning, I could hear the children running to the kitchen, discussing what they would be having for breakfast. At school, I had my timetable and the students knew where I was and when. I miss the routine at boarding home most of all;

it went from eating lunch together right through to our goodnight sing-songs. It quickly became an everyday thing.

I would love to see my students again. Through social media, I have managed to follow their progress over the past two years. When I was back at TSS for a month and a half this summer, I was especially happy to see so many familiar faces again. My boys, who were in grade seven two years ago, are now in grade nine. They have grown, their voices have broken or are in the process of breaking, and their style of dress has changed. But they still crack the same old jokes. And the games that I had brought with me were still cool even for the boys from the tenth grade.

If my children, grandchildren or friends' children ever want to do voluntary service at the TSS, I would advise them they should definitely not think that winter in Jordan is not cold. In fact, it is very cold. I don't think I've ever been as cold in my life as I was during my first winter in Jordan. So, you should definitely pack a winter jacket. I feel so connected to the work of the Schneller Schools, mainly because I know how important the TSS is as a second home for the children. This has become all the more apparent during the coronavirus pandemic.



TSS/Schnotz

Lisa Schnotz with children of her girl's family.



Offizielle Einweihung der Anlage, die nun die JLSS mit Strom versorgt.

## Photovoltaic system supplies the JLSS with electricity

**Khirbet Kanafar (JLSS).** Since the beginning of October, a photovoltaic system has been producing electricity for the Johann Ludwig Schneller School (JLSS). Several Rotary clubs, Rotary districts and the Rotary Foundation joined forces to finance it, with the Rotary clubs of Beirut-Cosmopolitan and Club Bietigheim-Vaihingen at the forefront and support from the clubs in Ludwigsburg-Alt-Württemberg, Ludwigsburg, Backnang-Marbach and Feldbach (Austria).

The system on two roofs of the workshop buildings produces up to 110 kilowatts. “The photovoltaic system comes at just the right time for the JLSS,” says Rev. George Haddad, the school’s director. In

times of a historic economic crisis, he says, it will help the school save money on electricity and generator diesel. A condition for the Rotary Foundation grant was that photovoltaics should be included in the training programme for industrial electricians, which now makes the training offer by the JLSS more attractive.

Rev. ret. Traugott Plieninger, who as a member of the Rotary Club of Bietigheim-Vaihingen was able to attend the inauguration at the beginning of October, hopes the system will not only have a beneficial effect on the future of the school, but will also give a boost to a better future for the Bekaa region and Lebanon.

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## At last, hot water again!

**Beirut (EMS/NECB).** People at the Moadieh Evangelical Center for Seniors in Beirut can finally take a hot shower again thanks to a new solar system. Due to the disastrous economic crisis and the massive fuel shortage in Lebanon, the state electricity supply more or less came to a halt several months ago. People who used to heat their water with electricity can now only shower with cold water – an enormous hardship, especially for older people. The management of the Moadieh Center and the

church leaders of the National Evangelical Church in Beirut (NECB), which is also the sponsoring church of the Johann Ludwig Schneller School, appealed for donations because inflation and the economic crisis have now completely depleted all the church’s reserves.

The “Stiftung Stuttgarter Lehrhaus” (Stuttgart Teaching House Foundation) and the Protestant Church in Baden were generous enough to donate €6,000 each.

## Substantial rise in donations

Food for thought and good news at the EVS General Meeting

For the second time in a row, the Evangelical Association for the Schneller Schools (EVS) was only able to invite members to a virtual General Meeting. Bishop Ibrahim Azar from Jerusalem and Reverend George Haddad joined us live from Lebanon. And the Luther congregation in Fellbach still celebrated a “Schneller service” on 7 November.

At least the EVS Executive Board travelled to Fellbach to attend the church service with the Luther congregation. The sermon on Psalm 85 was delivered by Reverend Susanne Gözl, who is member of the EVS Executive Board. She recalled the dramatic situation in Lebanon. Like the psalmist, she prayed “sadly and helplessly for our brothers and sisters and all the people in Lebanon.” But the psalm does not end with a cry for help, it culminates in a vision. There will come a time when righteousness and peace kiss each other. “The hope for a better future is what motivates many people in Lebanon to carry on despite everything, espe-

cially the people in charge at the Schneller schools. They do so because their focus is on the children and young people,” said Gözl.

Actually, the Lutheran Bishop of Jerusalem, Ibrahim Azar, was supposed to hold the sermon, but this was not possible because of Covid. Instead, he sent his greetings by video from Jerusalem. Azar himself was born at the Johann Ludwig Schneller School (JLSS) in Lebanon, where his father was once an educator. “We need the message of the Schneller schools and their educational work, which aims at Muslims and Christians getting to know one another.”

EVS Chairperson Kerstin Sommer then welcomed Lisa Schnotz as the 300th member of the association. The EVS might be long-established, but it was far from old, said Sommer.

The EVS Executive Board moved to the YMCA home to hold the General Meet-

It is wonderful that such virtual meetings are possible at all. But everyone on the EVS Executive Board would be even happier if they could meet members in person again.



EMS/Gräbe (2)



Bishop Azar could only send his greetings to the Luther congregation by video.

ing. 30 participants joined the meeting by computer. EVS Executive Secretary, Rev. Uwe Gräbe, reported on the general situation in Lebanon. He said there was extreme economic hardship and the partner church in Beirut was badly affected. For this reason, the Protestant Churches of Württemberg, Baden and Hesse and Nassau were now paying a substantial part of the salaries of the eight staff members.

At the TSS, the number of day students had dropped from 271 to 229 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. On the other hand, 74 young people had enrolled in the vocational training programme, a considerably higher number than the previous year (55 apprentices).

Rev. George Haddad joined online from Lebanon to report on the JLSS. In view of the extreme economic crisis, the work of the JLSS was more important today than ever before, he said. The school now also paid the transport costs for some children. The institution was also lenient with the school fees of day students, he said. Many families for whom school fees had not been a problem in the past now faced enormous financial problems, he said. "This crisis is unlike anything we have ever seen before," Haddad said. At present, 105 boys and girls were housed at

the boarding home, 145 were attending day school and 85 young people were enrolled in vocational training.

The report from Lebanon was followed by the report of the Executive Board and the Treasurer's report given by Christian Kissling. The income from donations had risen sharply by 17% in 2020, from 814,000 Euro in the previous year to 1,039,000 Euro. The main reason for this was the special appeal for donations for teachers' salaries during the pandemic, which brought in 242,000 Euro alone. Expenditure fell by 15% since the pandemic had prevented the attendance of events and travel. And when it came to the Schneller magazine, a change in agency and printing company had resulted in total savings of about 7,000 Euro despite increases in postage.

It was not possible to vote on a planned change to the constitution, which, among other things, would allow the Association to hold meetings and votes online after the pandemic, because the necessary quorum of 25 eligible voters was not achieved by a narrow margin. All members will therefore receive mail in the next few weeks to vote on the new constitution in writing.

*Katja Dorothea Buck*

The next General Meeting will not take place in November as usual, but on Sunday, **18 September 2022**. The reason for this is the 50th anniversary of the Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS).

# Role model, bridge builder and wonderful friend

On the death of Rev. ret. Klaus Schmid

**It is no exaggeration to say that the news of Klaus Schmid's death prompted mourning worldwide – and many expressions of gratitude for past events. For many decades, he worked selflessly with great commitment to the Schneller work.**

For over fifty years, Reverend ret. Klaus Schmid left his mark on the Schneller work, not only from Germany as long-standing chairman of the Evangelical Association for the Schneller Schools (EVS) or as EMS Middle East Liaison Secretary and EVS Executive Secretary. He has also left countless traces at the Schneller Schools themselves, in Amman and especially in Khirbet Kanafar. Even at a young age, he left a life-long impression on people – first as a volunteer, later as an educator, boarding home director and finally as deputy director of the Johann Ludwig Schneller School (JLSS).

Many learned of his death on 10 September 2021 through social media. The list of more than one hundred virtual expressions of sympathy is both impressive and touching. For example, Rev. Fuad Khouri, who lives

in Washington, writes: „We will remember him gratefully for all he did for the two schools.“ Nicolas Souleiman Haddad also remembers Klaus Schmid with the following words: „He was humble and exceptional. We will not forget him.“ And Bishara Tannous from Amman writes: „The teacher who taught us without saying many words will remain with us forever.“

The family of Ghazi Musharbash, who was director at the Theodor Schneller School in Amman for several years, also joins in the condolences: Klaus served the school with love and dedication and was very close to the children. He planted the seeds of love and affection in their souls.



A young Klaus Schmid in the midst of the young people for whom he was responsible at the Johann Ludwig Schneller School at the time.

EMS/Buck

Schmid



Friends and partners from the Middle East came to the award ceremony of the Federal Cross of Merit 2017: Rev. Khalid Freij from Amman, Rev. George Haddad from Khirbet Kanafar and on the right of Klaus Schmid, Rev. Habib Badr from Beirut.

With how much devotion Klaus Schmid was faithful to the Schneller work becomes clear in the words of George Haddad, Director of the JLSS, who was himself a boarding home child at the JLSS and lived in the group around „Brother Schmid“, as Klaus Schmid was called at the JLSS at that time. „The JLSS was a home for Brother Schmid. He gave the school his very best. He was an excellent educator, a very dedicated pastor, a disciplined, inspiring and loving person who cared unconditionally for underprivileged children. He was literally on duty around the clock, throughout the school year and summer holidays.“ He said that, in addition to his many duties, Klaus Schmid still found the time to lead a brass band and supervise gardening, crafts, woodwork, ceramics, stained glass, sports, table tennis, swimming, photography, board games, field trips and hikes. „He empowered his students to excel at everything, to discover their natural talents, to pursue very successful careers and to be very happy people.“

No task was ever too demeaning for Klaus Schmid, he said. He drove a tractor, put out fires in the school's wheat fields or cleaned the filter tanks of the Schneller springs in the mountains. He taught the older boys to cut other boys' hair and did painting work in the school buildings. „He was a great pastor who held Sunday services and daily devotions. He was much loved

by his students and colleagues. He was a peacemaker when there were disputes between people.“

The EVS will also sorely miss Klaus Schmid and remember him with reverence and gratitude. In his obituary at the funeral in Kirchheim/Teck, where Klaus Schmid had lived for the last few years near the family of one of his two daughters, Rev. Uwe Gräbe, his successor in the office of EVS Executive Secretary, said: „Klaus Schmid was a peacemaker, a person who did not impose his advice but, despite all his life experience, waited modestly until he was asked. Klaus Schmid was always passionate about his work. He was a bridge builder between cultures. He was a person who was as much at home in the Middle East as he was in Swabia, and who always encouraged others to adopt the best of both cultures.“

In 2017, Klaus Schmid was awarded the Federal Cross of Merit for his decades of commitment to the Schneller Schools. He was delighted to receive the award. But he was even happier to hear from his former students, that they were going their way and were successful and happy with their lives.

*Katja Dorothea Buck*

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Editors: Katja Dorothea Buck (executive),  
Dr. Uwe Gräbe, Felix Weiß

Translations to English: Chris Blowers

Vogelsangstraße 62 | 70197 Stuttgart  
Tel.: +49 (0) 711 636 78-39 | Fax: +49 (0) 711 636 78-45  
E-Mail: [evs@ems-online.org](mailto:evs@ems-online.org) | [www.evs-online.org](http://www.evs-online.org)  
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Contact address of Swiss Association for  
Schneller Schools in the Middle East (SVS):

Pfr. Ursus Waldmeier, Rüt mattstrasse 13, CH-5004 Aarau  
PC-Konto: 40-11277-8

IBAN: CH05 8148 8000 0046 6023 2

[info@schnellerschulen.org](mailto:info@schnellerschulen.org) | [www.schnellerschulen.org](http://www.schnellerschulen.org)

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*'Shout and be glad, Daughter Zion.  
For I am coming, and I will live among you,'  
declares the Lord.*

Zechariah 2:10



**EVS Evangelical Association  
for the Schneller Schools**

Vogelsangstr. 62 | 70197 Stuttgart | Tel. (0711) 636 78-39



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