

Lifegate in November 2024

The first heavy winter rains caused flooding in some places. We are happy about this long-awaited rain, which is now slowly turning a parched and yellow land green again. The beautiful winter sunsets over our small town of Beit Jala are always worth a moment of wonder and lingering.



We hope that the negotiated ceasefire in Lebanon will remain truly stable, and that there will be no return to the old situation. Israel's population lived on the northern border under constant provocation and threats from the pro-Iranian Hezbollah militias, who were planning an attack similar to the one carried out by Hamas. The Israeli people from this region, most of whom have been evacuated for a year (60,000), only want to return to the cities, kibbutzim and towns if Hezbollah militias are prevented from returning to the villages on the border with Israel. In these villages the Israeli army found many weapons, supply tunnels and detailed plans to conquer northern Israel. The last agreement with Lebanon (2006), which was supposed to guarantee that Hezbollah troops would stay behind the Litani River, was not honored by Hezbollah and was not prevented by the international UN soldiers. The

Lebanese army cooperated with Hezbollah and even now, just like the UN troops, is far too weak to control Hezbollah.

Many people in Israel doubt that the new agreements will be honored and the mood in Israel is that it is only a matter of time before further conflicts break out. In the days leading up to the signing of a ceasefire agreement, the clashes intensified once again. We witnessed non-stop rocket and drone attacks by Hezbollah as far as Tel Aviv and intensive bombing by the Israeli air force in Beirut and other places in Lebanon. Destruction, injuries and deaths every day in this war. In Gaza, 101 Israeli hostages are still trapped and many probably already dead, large parts of the Palestinian population are housed in tents and on the run, and fighting is still going on amidst the maltreated and sacrificed people. In Jerusalem and Bethlehem/Beit Jala, on the other hand, things remained calm. We are very grateful that we are literally not in the line of fire and therefore experience a lot of protection and we pray for our friends and acquaintances who are constantly have to run to shelters and/or fear for their lives.

On the road with people big and small

The children at the early learning center had a varied month in November. In warm autumn weather, we took two groups to visit the beautiful play area at Cremisan Monastery. A local scout group joined us and played Scottish-style music with their drums and bagpipes and then played with our children. A regular kindergarten in the neighboring village invited us to a psychomotor activity morning. The team had prepared lots of games and a delicious lunch for the children. A great inclusion initiative.



The scouts brought their musical instruments

Another Lifegate support group visited a kindergarten group from the Lutheran school in Beit Sahour, the teachers prepared a colorful play program and the children had a lot of fun together.



At the Mar Afram School in Beit Jala, 11 early intervention children from Lifegate were able to take part in a morning of music therapy with children from the school. At the end, the children made royal crowns together and went home freshly crowned.



Every year, we hold a special day to commemorate the "old customs" in the country. The children come to us dressed in hand-embroidered holiday costumes. We prepared a traditional Arabic breakfast together with the children and ate it together, and we paid a visit to the olive harvest taking place at the same time on our neighboring property. The olive trees that were cut back after the harvest provide us with beautifully grained, warm wood and a healthy and tasty oil.





The good old days

Olive oil is ready for shipment

Once again this year, the Lifegate team worked at the olive press in Taybeh to label the many filled bottles and canisters, pack them into boxes and place them on the shipping pallets. The olive oil from this region of biblical Samaria was already famous in ancient times for its spicy but sweet taste. It was used in many dishes, but also as a remedy (Good Samaritan) and for anointing kings and the sick. The oil is due to arrive in storage in Germany in January.



Here the 5 liter canisters are prepared for transportation

Sister Magdalena - a very cherished "original"

Friends are so important in life! Not far from Jerusalem's old train station in the middle of the former German colony (built in the second half of the 19th century) lies the St. Charles Convent of the Borromean Sisters. The hard-working and active sisters with their friendly superior Sister Daniela run a kindergarten for Arab children and a very nice guest house and they have been helping Lifegate for many years and are close friends of our work. Only recently I was able to receive old cotton fabrics from which we sew cloth bags, blankets and clothes for people who are cold in winter and many plastic bottles from which we build greenhouses at Lifegate. The sisters help us to receive goods delivered from Israel and store them until we can collect them. The oldest sister (well over 80) is originally from Beit Jala, the place where Lifegate works, and for many years she has been making very special Christmas cards for us, which we then send out at Christmas. This year I was able to pick up these little works of art again and will be able to bring joy to people with them. Sister Magdalena spins gold threads into beautiful patterns, a craft that only very few people have mastered. We look forward to her call every year and thank her and the sisters from the bottom of our hearts for all their deeds of love! We wish Sister Magdalena, as we like to say: "All the best until "120" and gladly even longer!"



With Sister Magdalena



Rare artisanship that we treasure

Family days with "Joni and Friends" in Lifegate Garden

11 families and their children with various disabilities spent two blessed days at the Lifegate Garden guest house. A dedicated team from the Immanuel Church in Bethlehem together with Lifegate staff organized a varied program and used the guest house and gardens for many activities in the warm autumn weather. The life and work of Joni Erikson Tada was presented to the participants in a movie. Guests and team members returned home strengthened and grateful for the cozy atmosphere, the excellent cuisine, the friendly service and the biblical preaching and prayers.

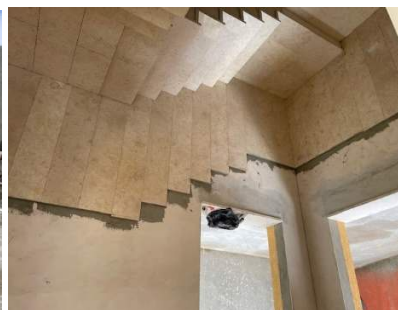




Relaxation and recharging for families in Lifegate Garden

Shelters and a wheelchair basketball court

Work also progressed well in November and we are looking forward to the elevator, windows and doors being delivered and installed soon. The project should be completed in January/February.



Designated space for the wheelchair basketball sports court and staircase down to the shelters



Air conditioning is installed in the shelters

Brave friends

Torsten and his son Georg are "repeat offenders". Since 2017, they have been personally involved in Lifegate's work with their German therapy centers. Since then, they have been sending us experienced and engaged therapists to train our own team. They came to Beit Jala shortly before their 20th anniversary in Germany, even in these difficult times, to train our team on site, discuss projects and thus support us. The friendship that has developed and grown over the years led to Torsten's election to the board of the association Tor zum Leben-Lifegate Rehabilitation e.V. in Germany. We would like to thank his family and company from the bottom of our hearts for all their commitment and help.



Top picture: Georg in the middle in the white T-shirt and Lifegate therapist team

Christmas in the Holy Land

It may still succeed:



- the guns could fall silent
 - Angels could proclaim the good news
 - there could be light and hope
 - Hands could be extended
 - Wounds could begin to heal
 - something completely new and beautiful could emerge
 - it could start with you and with me
- Are we ready?

The Prince of Peace has been born, right here in Bethlehem on our doorstep.

We trust Him with everything, we mourn our dead and injured to Him, we bring the destroyed and burnt land, the traumas we have experienced, our hopelessness, resignation and despair to Him.

He is the Lord over life and death and He gives the power of love, forgiveness and hope.

He straightens, He connects, He renews, He enters our hearts, He has the last word!

A big thank you from the bottom of our hearts to all our friends and supporters at the end of an eventful year!

Every prayer, every good thought, every deed for our work was received and we were able to experience peace, protection and blessing!

We sincerely wish you a happy, peaceful and blessed Advent and Christmas season.

With best wishes from our children, young people, their families and our team

Yours, Burghard Schunkert