

Lifegate in June 2024

"**Lifegate well on its way**" could be the headline for this month, which has already brought us midsummer temperatures, a war with the potential to become a conflagration, internal political conflicts in Israel. The main issues at the moment are conscription of Orthodox men for military service by a decision of the supreme court, calls for new elections and never-ending demonstrations to reach an agreement with Hamas to free the 120 hostages taken to Gaza (many of whom are probably no longer alive). On top of that there are reports of Russian-speaking mercenaries in Gaza, Russian submarines following Israeli submarines in the Red Sea, Hezbollah's weapons depot under Beirut's civilian airport, Iranian militias in Syria, Iraq and Yemen attacking Israel daily with drones and missiles, etc., etc. All of this is not exactly conducive to any form of emotional stability. How good it is to have a permanent (heavenly) address for our daily worries, to be able to shed our burdens, to be able to give practical shape to our devotion to people, love, trust and hope even in these times and to mourn with those who mourn on both sides and share the joy with those who are happy.

Two employees got married in June and a "bridal shower" took place in our Lifegate courtyard (men excluded).



Ladies Beauty in the Lifegate courtyard

"Men (fathers) very welcome!"

Even in our so-called patriarchal society, it is often the women and mothers who bring up the children, take care of the household, do the shopping, and often try to supplement the husband's salary and earn money by working. The men, if they can find regular work, often work two day shifts for different employers. If you want to achieve even a modest standard of living, drive a car and perhaps pay off an apartment or even a house, there is often no other option. So, it is always an effort to get the fathers of our disabled children and young people to attend a fathers' meeting. In June, we succeeded once again and 14 fathers accepted our invitation, much to our delight. After a short round of introductions, we gave the men a tour of our center and they saw how children and young people of different ages are supported at Lifegate. Afterwards there was time to get to know each other, talk and do some group activities that helped the men to thaw out. We encouraged the fathers to spend quality time with their families and especially their children and to actively participate in home-based support. A delightful breakfast together rounded off this successful morning. We are looking forward to receiving feedback from the wives in our mothers' groups to see whether this fathers-initiative will bear fruit.



"Off to the monastery"

The Selisian order, founded by the Italian priest Don Bosco in 1859, has been part of Bethlehem since the 19th century. A very good vocational training workshop for young people and a bakery that has been producing local flatbread for 130 years, thus helping many impoverished people, a historical collection of wooden cribs and olive woodwork, which are traditionally at home in Bethlehem, and many other interesting aspects of this order, which always turns its attention to the poor and disadvantaged in society, prompted us to organize a visit with our young people. At the same time, we are pleased that Lifegate has maintained good relations with the Austrian branch of Don Bosco in Vienna, "Jugend und eine Welt" (Youth and One World), for a number of years and that we have been able to submit a request for support from time to time.



"Happy and blessed days in Munich"

The Lifegate Rehabilitation Tor zum Leben e.V. association met for its annual general meeting on the premises of the Munich YMCA. The day before, some of us were guests of the organization "Sternstunden" (a German organisation that helps children in need) to report on the current situation in our country. We would like to thank the Sternstunden team from the bottom of our hearts for the warm welcome, the encouragement and the promise to continue to stand by our side and support our work! Old and new members of our association were happy to see each other again (which has not been possible in our country for 9 months now). The Executive Board led us through the agenda and there was time for discussion and conversations during the breaks. An open Saturday evening, to which guests and friends were invited, gave me the opportunity to report on my current work. And we closed out the successful weekend with on Sunday with a morning devotion with prayer fellowship. In addition to seeing many friends again, it was a special pleasure for me to welcome to our group Reimer Schermuly-Opitz, an old colleague from the YMCA College whom I had not seen for 40 years.

"Do good and talk about it". Under this motto we want to encourage our friends and members in Germany and around the world to present activities and actions that they carry out to support our Lifegate work so that it can have a "contagious" effect and give them an opportunity to share ideas and joy with us. Please send your contributions with pictures to Tzl@Lifegate-reha.de. Thank you!



Munich City Hall



General meeting of Lifegate Tor zum Leben e.V. at the YMCA Munich

"The cradle of Christianity"

...is actually in Bethlehem, but the first country to introduce the Christian faith as a national religion in 301 AD was Armenia. I was invited to this country with a team from the American organization Joni and Friends. We tried right up until the last moment to take three Palestinian Lifegate therapists with us, but unfortunately Armenia did not issue visas. Families with disabled children and some adults in wheelchairs were invited to a three-day program in a hotel in the mountains, which had been lovingly prepared by local Christians. The American organization Joni and Friends financed this measure. 25 young volunteers from Christian churches committed themselves (free of charge) 24/7 to the children during these days so that the parents could participate in the programs.

The Joni and Friends team encouraged the participants in talks and discussions, in devotions and prayer stations. We were all deeply touched by the openness, love and gratitude shown to us by the local team and the participants. Before and after these days, we had the opportunity to visit two facilities where children with disabilities can receive daily support and also to meet people in their homes and get an idea of how difficult living conditions are in poverty.

A young very motivated couple (Aram and Gohar) agreed to take over the responsibility for further activities of Joni and Friends in Armenia and they will work directly with us in Lifegate (coordination of

activities in the Middle East). Lifegate would also like to provide practical help and we will make further attempts to send our therapists to Armenia and invite Armenian staff to join us. A view of the very impressive "Ararat Mountains" (5137 m) just a few kilometers from the capital Yerevan reminded us of what our Bible says. Somewhere up there in the ice, the "new history" of our humanity began after Noah's ark was stranded on the mountain. I returned from this land richly blessed and encouraged.



The volunteer team at the family retreat in Armenia



Lots of fun with soap bubbles (left) A new friend in Armenia is waiting for a wheelchair





Visits to families with people with disabilities



Four wonderful people work with people with disabilities in Armenia



Ariel



Guzal



Aram and Gohar



The mountain Ararat (5137 m) somewhere here our ancestors started

The American, Armenian, and German team from Joni and Friends in the Ararat Mountains



From left: Rachelle, Gohar and Aram, Melissa and Steve, Grant and Burghard

Visit to the petting zoo

The Dutch institution Jemima began its activities at the same time as Lifegate in the same small street in Beit Jala in 1987. The focus of the Dutch founding couple at the time was work with mentally handicapped children. Today, the Jemima Center in Beit Jala is run by a very committed former Lifegate employee and for many years the two institutions have been linked by a deep friendship and a willingness to help each other's causes. Young and older people with mental disabilities live at Jemima, and the care team is on site all year round (and can therefore also look after the animals). A group of our early intervention children were invited to visit Jemima's newly established small petting zoo.



Animals you can touch, a new experience for our children

A trip to Haifa

A large Israeli aid organization often calls us when they sort out aids in good condition or even receive donations of new aids and want to pass them on. In June, for example, we were able to collect two large pallets of new walking aids (forearm supports) from the branch in Haifa. This sort of donation will enable us to maintain our long-term support for many people.



Fruit and vegetables in our school

A small stall was set up in the special school and the children were divided into sellers and buyers. They learned the names of the fruit and vegetables, the units of measurement gram and kilo, they used the correct currency and paid attention to the change. Above all, they learned how to actively support their parents and siblings the next time they went shopping. Life skills" has an important place in our support programs. Helping children and young people to become independent is an important goal for us. But, after all these lessons had been learned, the fruit was of course eaten.



Our lives are so often about "fruit". Jesus uses the image of the vine: "He who abides in me will bear fruit". Ultimately, it is the connection to the root that produces fruit, which all people can then enjoy. Plans, professionalism, and rules are very important, but the patience, love and hope in which the work is allowed to take place are fruits given as a gift, thank God! We wish you a blessed and enjoyable summer time! Yours Burghard Schunkert and Lifegate Team