

NEWSLETTER PENTECOST 2026

News from our team

The LIFEGATE team is grateful that our work continues day by day, even in times of crisis. And we are grateful for the safe spaces within our facility. Tamara Khalil has started working at the 'LIFEGATE Beauty Salon'. Two of her daughters attend our special needs school. Rana Mousallam heads the new 'Natural Cosmetics' department. Together with young people, we are starting to make soaps based on olive oil. Natalie Hodali heads up the new 'Art' training programme at LIFEGATE. Together with a group of young people, she has started setting up a small mosaic workshop. Natalie has lots of creative ideas and we are very excited about the work. Khader Abu Ghannam certainly grew up in a garden. He loves nature and has a deep connection to the earth. The first harvest of lettuce and onions has already been a success, and further organic vegetables are being grown. The LIFEGATE kitchens and our team benefit from healthy produce, and young people are also learning how to grow crops in our greenhouses. We wish the new team members all the best as they settle into their important roles, and we hope they have plenty of patience and kindness for the trainees.

Reflections

by Burghard Schunkert

"Admonish those who are disorderly, encourage the fainthearted, support the weak, and be patient with everyone."
1 Thessalonians 5:14

The Bible's teachings are often very practical and directed at situations and people who presumably need precisely this kind of guidance and encouragement. All too often, I find myself reflecting on our current circumstances in these passages. My day begins at 6.30 am with the drive to the LIFEGATE Centre. I would love to give a proper telling-off to the reckless road users who pay no heed to any rules or regulations. Tempers are frayed and the risk of an accident is high. It is only through prayer and forgiveness that I reach my destination. If you switch on the radio or the television, it doesn't take long before you hear people lamenting and weeping – and this has been going on for over two years now. The massacres in various places on 7 October 2023, the many people killed in the Gaza war, the suffering of the families of the hostages in Gaza, news from the wars, young people killed every day and now the incessant shelling from Lebanon, hopelessness, fear for life and livelihood, despondent and deeply wounded people everywhere. Often I have no words, sometimes tears, but I have a place where I can unburden myself every day: "With my Friend and Comforter in prayer, every day and every night!" He once said, "When you are weak, I am strong within you." How fortunate that I don't have to put on a front. That I can stand alongside the 'weak', because I

belong there. Very often, silence; perhaps holding a hand, a gentle touch, and sometimes a word, a word of encouragement. But always being there somehow, persevering, standing by. Patience is the theme of my life – I want everything right now and I want it to be perfect. There is someone who knows every second of my life, and He knows what's going on, what's important, what has to wait, and what must never happen. In life with Him, I am learning to be patient with God, with people, but above all with myself. This does not limit creativity; it is just the realisation that I must wait to see if and when the 'right' moment has come. Everyone could write their own story here. I encourage you. A joyful and blessed Pentecost!

Yours, Burghard Schunkert

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As representation and because of financing of the institution "LIFEGATE REHABILITATION", the association "Tor zum Leben - LIFEGATE Rehabilitation" was founded in the year 1993 in Germany with its board in Würzburg.

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Editorial managers: Richard Sharp & Volker Metz



Photo: LIFEGATE

LIFEGATE gardener Khader Abu-Ghannam with trainees growing organic vegetables.

Dear friends!

The airstrikes carried out by Iranian, Israeli, and U.S. forces, as well as by the Lebanese Hezbollah terrorist militia, since late February and early March have also led to many tense situations here in the region around Bethlehem, Beit Jala, and Jerusalem. In March and during the first few days of April the air raid sirens sounded every day and meant that we had to seek protection in our bomb shelters. This also meant that we had to decide on a daily basis how we could best provide a sense of safety and hope to the children, young adults, their families, and our team, while continuing to support the children and young adults. It's a good thing we set up two shelters in the LIFEGATE building a few years ago. LIFEGATE is almost the only facility with such shelters in the Palestinian area of Bethlehem–Beit Jala. When rocket alerts sounded, everyone inside the LIFEGATE building was able to take refuge in these shelters within five minutes. However, during the war, long trips from home to the LIFEGATE building are risky. For this reason we decided to resume remote teaching of our sponsored children via Zoom online meetings. Our young adults and all staff members continued to come to the LIFEGATE building every day. Work carried on—only interrupted by the missile alerts. Once the ceasefire began, all the children in our care were able to return to the rehabilitation centre — with this period of calm, many happy children's faces could be seen again, and the house was filled with vibrant activity.

When the daily missile and drone attacks largely ceased following the declaration of a ceasefire, the leaders of the Iranian, Israeli, and U.S. governments each announced that they had won the war. But there are no winners—rather, many who have lost in this war. Many children, women, and men lost their lives, while others were seriously injured. Even more people, particularly in neighbouring Lebanon, were driven from their homes. Residential buildings, bridges, and other civilian infrastructure were destroyed by airstrikes. Radical Israeli settlers exploited the war to intensify their terror attacks on the Palestinian population in West Bank, carrying out arson attacks, acts of violence, and murders.

How important and admirable are those Jewish and Arab Israelis, as well as Palestinians, who work together for a common cause, and those Israeli human rights activists who try to protect Palestinian villages from attacks by Israeli terrorists, even as they themselves come under attack.

We place our trust in the promise: "Behold, the Guardian of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps." We trust that God has not abandoned humanity. God does not make mistakes, and He loves His creatures in all their diversity. That is why we will continue to reach out, heal wounds, and build new bridges where others have torn them down. His Spirit brings peace to our hearts, but it does not remain there; rather, it extends out into our world.

Part of the newsletter was translated from German into English using the DeepL Translator (DeepL SE, Cologne, Germany).

LIFEGATE aid projects for impoverished families

For more than two years now, we have been dispatching up to 100 hot meals and just as many loaves of wholemeal bread from our centre every day. They go to people who have lost their jobs due to the ongoing difficult situation, to elderly people who no longer have any income (we have no state pensions, retirement pensions or social security benefits), and to people with disabilities. In order to reach as many people as possible we rotate the families served on a weekly basis. The current funding phase of the project comes to an end in May. We would very much like to prolong it, as the situation for many people has unfortunately not improved.

Photos: LIFEGATE



Young people and LIFEGATE staff in the shelter during a rocket alert..

New apprenticeship programmes at LIFEGATE

We are delighted to announce the launch of new apprenticeship programmes at LIFEGATE, which began this spring.

Organic vegetable growing. On a plot of land belonging to LIFEGATE Garden, we grow organic vegetables without the use of pesticides. We have already harvested lettuce and onions from this plot. We are now also starting to grow garlic, tomatoes, beetroot and herbs. This allows our LIFEGATE kitchen to be self-sufficient and provides our team with a high-quality source of produce. Young people learn all the steps involved in this cultivation process from our gardener, Khader Abu-Ghannam, and can then create their own gardens on the grounds of their parents' homes. We continue to build greenhouses from old plastic bottles and give them to the young people as a starting point for growing vegetables in their home towns.

Mosaics are part of our heritage. Whilst out for a walk in the woods on the outskirts of Jerusalem, I came across an old oil press whose floor was made up of countless tiny mosaic tiles. The craft of mosaic-making has a long tradition in this region. As part of a new training programme, our trainees create small, practical works of art. This group of young people approaches the task with great enthusiasm and dedication.

We have opened a ladies' hairdressing salon where young women are trained by our hairdresser. There is also a manicure area there. Here, other young women learn how to create beautiful nail designs. Trainees can later practise both trades from home, where they need only a little space and equipment to help earn a living. Olive oil soap is a traditional

product of our country and is renowned for its gentle and mild cleansing properties. Our "Olive Mild" soap is enriched with natural flowers and fragrances (jasmine, lavender, thyme and others). We plan to sell the olive oil soap on the European market in attractive packaging. Young people with disabilities are involved in every stage of the manufacturing process.

LIFEGATE Bakery. Demand from our friends abroad and in Israel for our sourdough baked goods has remained steady despite the war. We are delighted that our bakery goods have now also arrived in the first local supermarkets. We will continue to offer high-quality, healthy baked goods. And we hope to soon be able to bring in a German professional baker again to provide further training for our bakery team.



Ala and Burghard unload dozens of wheelchairs that have been delivered to LIFEGATE from the USA.

Wheelchairs and assistive devices from "Joni and Friends" in the USA

We are delighted and grateful that, despite the war and the many restrictions here in the country, a container of wheelchairs from the US organisation 'Joni and Friends' arrived safely in April. Wheelchair distributions are taking place at the LIFEGATE building. We are also taking the wheelchairs to those towns and cities with which we have already signed agreements, in order to help people with disabilities locally. In April, May and June, many of these aids will provide crucial support to children, young people and the elderly.

Yusif from Hebron: a circle closes after many years

Yusif was 13 years old when he became known through an international affairs programme ('Weltspiegel') on ARD (one of the major German TV broadcasters). The fate of the boy, who was born with only one arm, moved many people and they donated money. Then a search began in our country for someone to take charge of the young man's rehabilitation. We took Jusif to one of the best hand prosthesis specialists in Israel, and he received his first prosthesis from him. At that time, Jusif attended therapy sessions at LIFEGATE regularly. The years passed, and we had hardly any contact until Jusif met us again six months ago, now a strong young man. We invited him to work in our assistive technology department, repairing wheelchairs and walking aids. At the same time, we had a new prosthetic hand made and worked on a shoe lift for his shortened leg. Jusif remains our point of contact in Hebron whenever we need help with repairing assistive devices. The young man is building his own flat and plans to get married. Jusif has grown up and will go his own way. The 'Life-Gate' remains open for him, and if he needs us, we will be by his side.



Progress in the "Sensory Garden"

Great progress has been made on the neighbouring plot we've acquired: the site has been beautifully landscaped, and sanitary facilities and a small outdoor kitchen have been installed. Now we're setting up the 'sensory stations', which we've built from old wooden pallets. There is a barefoot path, a scent station with lavender, jasmine and thyme, play and balancing stations, a gathering place for theatre games, a large sandpit, a play kitchen and a sound corner. Comfortable seating and quiet spots are also included. We are delighted to have this opportunity. It is a space that we are also happy to make available to our team for family celebrations and special occasions for a small fee. This will help us contribute to the running costs.

Your help counts ...!

Thanks to your help we were able to ...

- ... continue developing the sensory garden on our site (€20,000);
- ... launch training courses in five new professions at LIFEGATE in January (€60,000);
- ... fund parent support and staff training (€50,000).

With your help, we'd like to...

- ... carry out daily support work at the early intervention centre, the special school, the groups for severely disabled children, the therapy department and the vocational training workshop for 200 to 250 children and young people every day (monthly costs €90,000);
- ... provide special support for medical work at LIFEGATE, including doctor's appointments, treatments, therapy and assistive devices (€30,000 for two months)
- ... purchase and manufacture training equipment for intensive therapy (€10,000).

Thank you very much for your support!

These concerns make up a certain part of our monthly costs, which are in total about 90,000.- €. They are the most urgent of our concerns and we'd be especially grateful for your support.