

News from our team

Maram Khalilieh and Jessica Hananije ended their work at the special needs kindergarten and Sewar Qumsieh in the group for severely disabled children. Luisan Shaheen, who previously worked in the bakery, left LIFEGATE to take up a new position with better working hours. Jane Slayby started working in our early intervention program, and Ayman Khair is now supporting the LIFEGATE bakery. Elisa Mitwasi joined us as a speech therapist to better meet the great need in this area among our children. Many children cannot speak properly and have problems eating and swallowing. We are delighted to welcome Eberhard, Frank, and Nale, the first three volunteers from abroad, who have settled in well and started their work with us. We hope that our situation will remain stable and that up to twenty volunteers will be able to join us again this fall. We wish God's rich blessings on all those who are leaving and all those who are coming.

Reflections

by Burghard Schunkert

"Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching."
Hebrews 10:25

"When I walk in the forest, God is closer to me than in any church." "We can also watch a church service on the internet." "Sunday is the only day when I can go on an outing with my family or have some time to myself." All of these statements certainly contain a grain of truth, yet the Epistle to the Hebrews admonishes the congregation addressed there. It is not only about what you receive in church, a new insight, encouragement in your life situation—it is also about the fact that others need you, your words, and your encouragement.

The church is a gathering of different people with their natural and God-given spiritual gifts who listen to God's Word together, talk with God and with each other, proclaim the gospel to all people in the community through many acts of love, and celebrate the Lord's Supper together with Jesus. When the first church was founded in Jerusalem at Pentecost, people gathered in their homes, listened to the words of Jesus as conveyed by the disciples, shared their possessions, and ate together. The other inhabitants of Jerusalem saw that there were people who treated each other with love. There was no need for attractive programs because the people themselves were contagious and attractive. Thus, the church grew all by itself, day by day. Many people today complain about churches that are often empty and conform to social trends. Jesus Christ is the same today as He was then, and His words have the same saving and redeeming effect and do not need to be adapted to the spirit of the times.

His message was unacceptable and radical to many people back then—and it still is today. Where clear biblical proclamation is given space, churches remain intact even today. Every member of the body of Christ has its wonderful value and purpose. We need each other. So it starts with you and me. I wish us the courage to reach out to other "brothers and sisters" and to build churches where we live. God wants to save people and call them to follow Him through you and me. As in Jerusalem back then, our visible love for one another will not remain hidden, but will infect others, for the "Day of the Lord" has certainly come a little closer.

Your 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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Physiotherapist Issa customizes a walking trainer for little Mohammed.

Photo: LIFEGATE

Dear friends!

October 7 will mark two years since southern Israel was attacked and the worst massacre of Jewish people since the Holocaust took place. On October 7, 2023, a war also began in the Middle East that continues to this day. It affects the populations of Israel, the Palestinian territories, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Iran, and also Americans. In the course of this war, there have been major changes among Israel's enemies. The terrible suffering of the population of the Gaza Strip continues, and 48 Israeli hostages are still being held there. At the beginning of August, the current Israeli government ordered the complete conquest of Gaza City, and Israeli ground troops began fighting their way through the city quarter by quarter. The relatives of the hostages fear that this advance will lead to the death of their captive family members.

The new Jewish year begins on September 22. In view of the suffering, this year's New Year celebrations will not be a joyful occasion. Israel's population is divided between opponents and supporters of the war. The people on the Palestinian side are not only concerned about the population of the Gaza Strip. They also fear that the announced expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank will lead to the end of Palestinian autonomy and the outbreak of a new intifada. The peace treaties between the State of Israel and several Arab states are also threatened by the massive settlement construction.

We often plant small seeds of hope. We are applying to the Israeli military authorities for permits for our young people to take part in a meeting camp with Israelis at the Sea of Galilee in October. We want to send a team to Jordan in September to distribute wheelchairs to many people in need and to adjust them to their needs. In Jericho, we supply the hospital and the municipal health department with medical aids. Many children and young people came to LIFEGATE after the summer break and began an intensive period of support with us.

We are appalled by the hatred of Jewish people that is being openly expressed all over the world. Hatred of Jews has existed for more than two millennia. But now hatred and violence against Jewish people is being legitimized because Israel is at war. More than half of Israelis demonstrate almost continuously against this war every week. In democracies, governments function according to the majorities in parliament, which are usually re-elected after four or five years at the latest, as is the case in Israel. This means that even very unpleasant elected governments must be tolerated and violence must not be incited. Radical parties and groups want to destroy the coexistence of different groups in our societies. We are all called upon to protect people!

Yusif – a remarkable comeback

Several years ago, as part of their program "Weltspiegel", German television channel ARD featured a boy from Hebron who was born with only one arm. Yusif lived alone with his deaf mother in an apartment on a conflict-ridden street in Hebron, on the border with the Jewish quarter, where there was a constant Israeli military presence. The program showed the difficult life of this very positive little boy and the hopelessness of his surroundings. At the time, a lot of money was donated to provide Yusif with a prosthetic arm, and LIFEGATE was asked if we could take care of Yusif. We introduced him to the best orthopedic technician at the time at Tel-HaShomer Hospital in Israel, where Yusif finally received a prosthetic arm. At first, he thought it was cool, but after a while, his friends teased him about his "plastic arm." Yusif took off the prosthesis and continued to live with only one arm. We kept in touch with him over the years, visited him, and invited him several times to receive therapy at LIFEGATE. In addition to his missing arm, Yusif has an extremely short leg and now suffers from severe hip pain. We therefore first provided Yusif with a shoe lift; in the future, he will need a new hip joint, but Yusif is currently too young for this procedure.

Until mid-August, the young man did heavy physical work to support his mother and himself. He carried refrigerators, stoves, and washing machines on one shoulder to the delivery vehicles that transported them away, which increased his pain. Finally, Yusif accepted our offer and began free training in our assistive technology workshop on August 19. Yusif is in contact with an Israeli-Palestinian start-up initiative from which he can obtain new arm prostheses. Every month, we give him €700 to cover his and his mother's living expenses and the cost of transportation between Hebron and Beit Jala. (This is roughly equivalent to what he was earning before.) We are delighted that a new door to the future has been opened for Yusif and that a young person has been given a new perspective on life.

News from early intervention

The oldest children in our program (aged 6) have transferred to the LIFEGATE school. We worked intensively before the summer holidays to prepare for the start of school and hope that the "move" will now go well for the children and teaching staff. In the past, LIFEGATE therapy work has achieved great success with children in their early years. This prompted us to lower the admission age and, since August, to also accept one-year-old children. Our German special education teacher, Erik Praetorius, continues to provide internal training and supervision in the support work, addressing the new developments.



Yusif comes from Hebron every day to attend training at LIFEGATE.



Achmed is learning to read and write in his native language, Arabic, with our teacher Amira.

Collaboration with "Joni and Friends" and other organizations

In July, we carried out a major campaign in which wheelchairs were distributed and individually adapted for more than eighty younger and older people in need. These wheelchairs were provided by the US aid organization *Joni and Friends*. A second round is planned for the end of September at another location in the West Bank, where up to 100 people will receive these important aids. In addition, we plan to send the head of LIFEGATE's aid work and a trainee to Jordan this month to distribute wheelchairs. Together with a US team from *Joni and Friends* and four employees from Armenia, we hope to provide good care for many people in our neighboring country.

Some time ago, we came into contact with the Israeli organization *MAKOM BA'LEV* (in English, "a place in the heart"). At *MAKOM BA'LEV*, Israelis who believe in Jesus are involved in working with young adults with disabilities. Further discussions were arranged, which may lead to an exchange program and coordination with the activities of LIFEGATE and *Joni and Friends*.

We are delighted that a group from the Palestinian *Young Women Christian Association (YWCA)* in Beit Sahour was our guest for an extended seminar at LIFEGATE and that the spectrum of our contacts is expanding.

News from the construction sites

Work on our neighboring property was not always easy during these summer months with temperatures reaching up to 40°C. We are pleased that the entrance area for dropping and picking up children and young people with disabilities will soon be completed, and we will then be able to design the play and training stations for the children's senses. We are looking forward to welcoming a number of volunteers who have already signed up to help with the work in this "sensory garden" over the coming months. The newly constructed water cistern in the LIFEGATE Garden guest house collects fresh water to supply the building. The evacuation route from the roof, which was required by the civil protection authorities, has now been built.

News from the LIFEGATE workshops

The summer holidays began in mid-July for the children at the special needs kindergarten and school. Work continued in the therapy departments, workshops, and service area after July as needed or to complete orders. We are delighted that the annual delivery of gift items made from olive wood, ceramics, and embroidery produced by us and ordered by the German LIFEGATE support association has been shipped to the warehouse in Tauberbischofsheim, Germany. A repeat order of the popular LIFEGATE olive oil has also arrived there and is waiting for grateful customers. We are already asking our friends in church communities to make ample use of these products at events, among their friends, and when planning Christmas bazaars. The proceeds from the sale will enable young people with various disabilities to receive vocational training and thus a hopeful future.

A group of young people from the LIFEGATE special school began vocational training in our workshops after the summer holidays. The young people had already completed "taster internships" in the workshops during the last school year to help them decide on a career choice.

Nine young people completed their successful vocational training at LIFEGATE with a certificate and good prospects. Our social workers will accompany and support them as they enter working life. The farewell ceremony was overshadowed by a sad event: Mahdi, one of the nine young people, died at home the night before as a result of an epileptic seizure. Mahdi left a void, but a picture and a candle reminded us of this young man and showed us that every day in life has a special importance.

Your help counts ...!

Thanks to your help we were able to ...

- ...finance vocational training for young people with disabilities (€50,000);
- ...purchase tablets with communication programs to support children diagnosed with autism (€10,000);
- ...finance the improvement of the LIFEGATE service vehicle (€15,000).

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

- ... finance the work at the LIFEGATE special school in the fall (€150,000);
- ... support our medical and therapeutic work with children and young people (€50,000);
- ... finance parent and home visit work in the coming months (€30,000).

These concerns make up a certain part of our monthly costs, which are in total about 80,000.- €. They are the most urgent of our concerns and we'd be especially grateful for your support.

Thank you very much for your support!