

News from our team

Nadja Ghnaim supports the team in the LIFEGATE bakery and is now learning to bake bread using sourdough recipes. Lourd Stephan came as a speech therapist and replaces Mariam Jaraiseh, who found another job in Jerusalem (unfortunately, LIFEGATE cannot keep up with the salaries in Israel). Mariam continues to work with us on some afternoons and Saturdays, as speech therapy is very often needed. Laila Azzeh finished her work in the class for severely disabled children, and Cloude Hosh joined this branch of work instead. Mary Saed supports our administration at LIFEGATE. She manages several projects, helps with bookkeeping and is involved in public relations. Abir Bannoura is in charge of training five young people in LIFEGATE Garden. The young people are trained in cleaning and decorating the guest rooms, learn to work in the kitchen and dining room and tend the garden together. In these difficult times, the LIFEGATE team is very grateful for the daily tasks and the stability of the jobs and would like to thank you for this.

in the Holy Land, but also all over the world. Values are shifting, role models are hard to find, many conflicts are being fought out with bad words and then with weapons. People mourn, people despair, people no longer have hope.

It is not just an old story but a promise that speaks to every one of us in our daily lives. Jesus says to the eleven men at the end of this encounter in Galilee "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world". You are not going alone, I am going with you, I am always with you.

This is what we lean on and what supports and carries us through each and every day; it is what we talk about and what enables us to go forth confidently. Will you join us on the way?

Your Burghard Schunkert

Reflections

by Burghard Schunkert

"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. ... and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

Matthew 28, verses 18b and 20b

Eleven Jewish men gather on a mountain in Galilee. Jesus, risen from the dead, had asked for the meeting. Some doubted, they did not believe that Jesus was standing before them, but came anyway. Jesus says to them: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." In other words: whatever happens on this earth, and in your personal life, is neither too unimportant, nor too powerful, and never hopeless, because it does not depend on your strength, intelligence and abilities, but is under my authority. Even death will not separate you from me. (Ten of these men and one chosen for Judas Iscariot were murdered).

Jesus then sends these men into the world to spread the news of His plan of salvation for humanity and to call people to follow him. They all went, and through them miracles happened, churches were founded and many of us came to believe in Jesus.

These are tumultuous times where many of the foundations of our lives are being shaken, not only here

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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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"Tor zum Leben - LIFEGATE Rehabilitation" is a member of the Diakonische Werk of the Protestant churches of Germany and Caritas-Verband for the catholic diocese Würzburg. The dedication of LIFEGATE is based on and supported by personal and long-standing relationships with the Young Men's Christian Association, YMCA, national association in Germany, CVJM.



Photo: LIFEGATE

As part of our inclusion activities, our children played with children without disabilities in a regular kindergarten

Dear friends!

7 October marked the anniversary of the Hamas attack on Israel, in which over 1200 Israelis were killed and 240 people were kidnapped and taken to the Gaza Strip. Around one hundred of these hostages are still in the Gaza Strip and it is feared that most of them have already been killed. In Israel, people are talking about the greatest trauma since the Holocaust. The attack on Israel at the beginning of October 2023 led to house-to-house fighting in the 360 square kilometre strip of land, the most densely populated area on earth with two million people. In this guerrilla war, Israel's enemy is operating among the civilian population (mosques, hospitals, schools and UN buildings). Fighting is fierce in the Gaza Strip and up to 40,000 people are believed to have been killed there. The day after the Hamas attack, Hezbollah also began firing at Israeli targets on an almost daily basis. This led to the evacuation of 60,000 Israelis in northern Israel.

Israel is now also under attack from Iraq, Iran, Yemen and Syria. After many unsuccessful attempts to use diplomatic means to bring an end to the exchange of blows between Hezbollah and the Israeli army, Israeli security services and armed forces have used targeted killings to eliminate the leadership of Hezbollah and Hamas. Meanwhile, the Israeli Air Force is attacking Hezbollah infrastructure in Beirut and other parts of Lebanon, while Israeli ground forces are operating in the southern Lebanese border region to restore security to Israeli towns and settlements. Shortly before the anniversary of 7 October, Israel was again attacked from Iran with

ballistic missiles and combat drones. Palestinian terrorist attacks in Israel and Israeli army operations in the West Bank have killed a number of people. Unfortunately, we do not yet see an end to the spiral of violence.

We could not have imagined writing such an introduction to a newsletter until October 2023. Despite the circumstances, we continue to live and work on a daily basis with our children and young people at LIFEGATE and have so far experienced protection and security. Our children, young people, their parents and our team are grateful that the good daily routine provides a welcome respite from the sad news. We are also very happy to be able to pay our team their monthly salaries (often the only salary the families still receive). We continue to work for peace and reconciliation in our small, manageable area. The bridges to friends in Israel remain in place and we are using them. We support impoverished people as best we can and wait for the day when swords are forged into ploughshares. And we believe that it will not be by might, nor by power, but by God's intervention. We ask you, our friends, to stay by our side and keep us in your prayers.

With best regards, the LIFEGATE team.

From early intervention at kindergarten age to vocational training for young people

Learning through play... The new support year started with renewed vigour in the early learning kindergarten at the end of August. Many children transferred from the kindergarten to the LIFEGATE school, so we were able to welcome many new children to the kindergarten. These first few weeks are always particularly challenging for the new, mostly three-year-old children. The first time without mum and dad in a kindergarten group, many a tear is shed. To make this time a little easier and to start the new LIFEGATE year with new topics, our teachers worked with Erik Praetorius on the topic of "Encouraging children through play". They first worked together on why play in early childhood is so important for children's development, how children's play develops and what is important - playing together, letting the child try things out, playing at the child's developmental level. Equipped with a list of the aspects they had worked out, the colleagues were then able to try out new "rule games" with the children. Erik observed all the colleagues and then gave them individual video-based feedback and recommendations for the next period. In this way, we try to implement the content of the training courses step by step. During the many games we played together, we experienced great moments of joy, fun and excitement for both the children and the teachers.

No one is forgotten... Fourteen children with severe and multiple disabilities are lovingly welcomed, cared for and supported in two support groups every day. We are delighted that these children are making good progress and that their life situations are improving rapidly thanks to the intensive therapeutic attention they receive. Their support is a growing area of work at LIFEGATE, for which the parents of these children are very grateful.

School that brings joy... The special school is located on the upper floor of the LIFEGATE building and accommodates 120 children aged between six and 16. Two specialists work in each of the support groups with up to 15 children. Occupational therapists and special needs teachers complement each other in some groups and contribute their different skills and training. The children, with their individual cognitive and physical challenges, are assigned to the support classes according to their age. This gives them a natural experience of recognising different people and learning to take each other into consideration. Our daily challenge is to customise the support and to respond to each individual young person and to always pick them up where they are in their life and development situation.



Demetrius learns new skills through play in the early intervention kindergarten

The teams at the kindergarten, school and vocational training workshop receive constant support from the LIFEGATE therapists. The children are taught a large part of the curriculum of the regular Palestinian school. And they learn about our conviction that God created all people and that every person is his marvellous creature. So we want to respect and love all people, even those who are very different from ourselves - especially in these times when many people are experiencing pain.

And now I'm learning a trade... Being able to learn a trade is the exception for young people with disabilities in the West Bank (and in many other regions). There is no dual training system in companies or businesses like there is in Germany. Trades are only taught in courses at a few vocational schools. There is still too much resentment, too many reservations in society against people with disabilities being able to learn, be successful and productive. They are often only seen as people who need to be pitied and cared for and are actually a burden on the family. We are delighted to see the astonished faces of new young people and their parents when they visit and get to know for the first time our 14 training programmes in the LIFEGATE workshops. We not only offer training, but people with disabilities are actively involved in production or services in every department. They work with us, earn something and contribute to their livelihood. Alongside the practical training, we teach the young people Arabic, maths and general education. Many had only been to school briefly or not at all before their time at LIFEGATE, others sat in their school classes for years without receiving any attention and unfortunately had learnt almost nothing. But it is never too late to learn. Our programme also includes good therapeutic support, learning social skills and sports activities for the young people. During excursions and meetings, they get to know the "country and its people" and are no longer hidden away somewhere. It is a special gift that this summer we were able to place eight young people in local jobs after they had completed their vocational training - especially at a time when many people have lost their jobs and entire sectors of the economy (e.g. tourism) are in decline.



View of the LIFEGATE building from above

The "unseemly" topic of money

LIFEGATE's support work is carried out by committed people. In return, our one hundred employees should receive a fair salary, the LIFEGATE building should not be hot in the summer or cold in the winter, the vehicles should run and sufficient work materials should be available. This costs a total of around €110,000 per month. Most parents pay a small monthly contribution of €80 for their child, but we have to finance a place with €400 to €500 per month. There is no basic financial security from public Palestinian organisations. This means that we have to finance 100% of the work ourselves. We have been expanding trade in our gift items and olive oil in Germany for years.

In more peaceful times, our service branches (bakery, shoe repair, laundry, catering service, guest operations in LIFEGATE Garden) generated almost half of the required budget. But the war kept the guests away, many people in the West Bank lost their jobs and many families fell into poverty. But we have not been idle. For example, the therapy department works for external patients in the afternoons and on Saturdays; we have also been able to expand the range of products in the bakery. Supported by financial aid from abroad, we have been baking fifty loaves of bread a day since the beginning of the war and cooking just as many meals, which we serve free of charge to people in need. Many friends in Germany organised special campaigns for our work, and time and again a transfer arrived just in time for the bills to be paid. It is a great grace and joy to see that even in these times of need we are provided for by our friends and by our marvellous God. Thank you very much for this - stay by our side!

Your help counts ...!

Thanks to your help we were able to ...

- ... finance the basic work of LIFEGATE in the special kindergarten, special school and vocational training workshop (€ 60,000);
- ... start fitting out the underground shelters and storage rooms (€ 15,000);
- ... carry out major repair work, in particular replacing the compressor of the air-heat pump, cleaning the air-conditioning ceiling, replacing the switching unit in the passenger lift, repairing the photovoltaic system, repairing the oven in the bakery (€ 20,000).

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

- ... finance the ongoing support work in the winter half-year (€ 15,000);
- ...start work on the play and adventure garden (on our acquired neighbouring property) for children with disabilities (€ 25,000);
- ...provide equipment and funding for ongoing work (€ 30,000);
- ...purchase a good quality and robust oven for the bakery (€ 20,000).

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!