

News from our team

Marian Shaheen ended her involvement with LIFEGATE. She was replaced by Angi Mofdi, who is currently settling in as a teacher. We are delighted to welcome Michael, Adalbert and Johannes from the Erzgebirge that lie along German-Czech border (the first three volunteers in a year), who worked with commitment, friendliness and efficiency for 14 days, replacing floor tiles in our early intervention rooms. The local team of employees is grateful for the monthly payments they receive for their dedicated work. Many families are now living solely on their salaries as their spouses have lost their jobs. We are happy to provide security and stability, which many people are lacking these days. We often don't let the efforts to make this possible show. We work and pray diligently behind the scenes and are very happy when the salaries arrive in the employees' accounts on the "first of the new month" and all bills for the month can be paid. For us (who do the calculating and budgeting), this is often a miracle. We thank God and our friends that it happens again and again.

**“A man sees what is before his eyes,
but the Lord looks at the heart.”**

1 Samuel 16, verse 7b

Reflections

by Burghard Schunkert

The prophet Samuel risked life and limb. God had instructed him to anoint a new king for Israel, even though the old king was still in office and had no plans to be replaced. God sent him to Jesse's family in Bethlehem for this purpose. Jesse had his seven strong sons march before Samuel, but none of them was the candidate God had chosen. "Do you have another son?" the prophet asked. The youngest, David, was tending the sheep and was out in the field. Samuel anointed him as the new king of Israel in Bethlehem. "A man sees what is before his eyes, but the Lord looks at the heart". God sees the inconspicuous, the weak, the homeless, the marginalized, the eternal losers, the sick and people with physical and cognitive challenges. With God, a shepherd can become the king of a nation. David, of course, had to wait 10 years to take up his new calling.

1100 years later: A man and a woman from David's family set off, leaving Nazareth. 130 km on foot through the mountains of Samaria, forests with wolves, bears, lions, wild boars and robbers. Finally, the ascent through the Judean desert up to Bethlehem. The woman was heavily pregnant. No room, no bed to give birth to a child hygienically. A cave with animals, a feeding trough as a bed, this is how the Savior and Redeemer, God's only Son, came into our world.

His later team includes fishermen, tax collectors, a thief (Judas), "normal and sometimes despised people", doubters and often failures, and it is precisely these people who later bring the good news to the whole world. Together they are on the road for 3 years, Jesus speaks to people, is a guest of sinners, heals the sick and lepers and loves the children. Word and deed always belonged together. Often in danger and persecuted, in the end arrested, slandered, left alone, executed. Jesus was in the realm of the dead. After three days, even the last enemy, death, was overcome.

We celebrate the birthday of this man who failed in the eyes of many people. God became one of us, even in our pain, fear and despair a bright light shines and warms our hearts. His birthday may also become our birthday for a life with HIM. Let us invite him! Merry and blessed Christmas,
Yours Burghard Schunkert

LIFEGATE REHABILITATION

Beit Jala
P.O.B. 10369, Jerusalem
phone +972-(0)2 2741373
fax +972-(0)2 2741065
Email: reha@lfgate.org
<https://www.lifegate-reha.org/en/>

account for donations:
account holder Lifegate-Rehabilitation
Mercantile Bank Jerusalem, Israel
branch 638, Swift code: BARDILIT
account no. 61-244988

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.
TOR ZUM LEBEN –
LIFEGATE REHABILITATION e.V. (TzL)
PO Box 101018
D-44010 Dortmund
phone: +49 (0)931-5 80 69
mobile: +49 (0)15792361991
Email: geschaeftsstelle@lifegate-reha.de

"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

Another step towards inclusion: Eleven children from the LIFEGATE special school took part in a morning of music therapy together with children from the "Mar Afram" school in this regular school in Beit Jala.

Dear friends!

We look back on 2024 as a difficult year for us, but also a blessed one. Despite many bad events and news in the country, our team experienced many wonderful moments in LIFEGATE's support work with the children and young people entrusted to us. We were able to invite children from mainstream schools in the country to visit us and spend quality time together. We were often invited back to these schools, and the LIFEGATE children helped many of the pupils to lose their "fear of contact". After many years of waiting, new sports wheelchairs arrived at LIFEGATE this year thanks to a donation and our wheelchair basketball team has a lot of fun at weekly training sessions at a local school. We hope that friendly matches with our Israeli friends will soon be possible again.

Even in times of war and danger, we were able to expand the LIFEGATE wholemeal bakery and increase our customer base. Word of our healthy wholemeal bread and LIFEGATE pretzels has spread, especially among foreigners in the country, but more and more locals are also enjoying the good bakery products. A patisserie with Black Forest gateau and other delicious cakes and tarts was added to this range.

The LIFEGATE construction project under the courtyard at the rear of the building is due to be completed this year. The safe rooms serve as a shelter from rocket fire and also as storage rooms. A wheelchair basketball court on the roof of the rooms enables our team to train. Construction work has

begun on the purchased neighboring property. First the boundary walls will be erected and then we want to start designing the landscape and building the stations for play and sensory training. We would like to recruit creative volunteers to contribute their manual skills.

Many Christians in our country do not feel like celebrating on this second Christmas during the war. It is the many young people who have lost their lives in this war - funerals and people crying are part of our everyday lives. Many buildings and houses have been damaged or destroyed, people have lost their jobs - mistrust, fear and hopelessness are written all over people's faces. Every day, we are called upon to provide comfort, understanding and support. That's why we took a closer look at the Christmas story in the "Reflections" section and realized that the Christmas tree, tinsel, mulled wine and gift-giving hype were not the main focus at all. On the contrary, "the original" reminded us very much of our current situation in Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Gaza and Beirut in 2024. Difficult and hard times, persecution and death everywhere and yet in the midst of it all, God's light and His presence.

Merry and peaceful Christmas,
Burghard Schunkert and the LIFEGATE team!

New support, service and work areas at LIFEGATE

Photos: LIFEGATE

LIFEGATE's work has grown continuously over many years. The requests always came from the community. We listened, we looked, we prayed and we dared. We often started with the confidence that the support would come and it did. In all areas, we were able to increase the quality and quantity of our work. The earlier you can start supporting a child, the better the chances of good and helpful development. This year, several parents approached us with the request to check whether their one-and-a-half-year-old children could receive support at LIFEGATE. Previously, the age of entry into early intervention was three years. Younger children could already be brought to therapy. There are now four children under the age of two at LIFEGATE - and more are coming. In a trial run with two of the children, we are already seeing good results. We decided to offer a group of children from the age of one in the early intervention area from January 2025. We also owe this wonderful development to the advocacy of our employee Erik Praetorius, who has been supporting our early intervention work for three years through the German organization "Coworkers" and has just become the father of a young son himself. For several years now, young women with disabilities have repeatedly asked us whether we could offer training in hairdressing and hand cosmetics (fingernail care). A German friend of our work and an Italian hairdresser have already offered to work as volunteers. We have now decided to launch this training, which will again include a service area for "customers" from the village and will thus be partly financed. Initial discussions with a mother of two girls from our sponsorship program, who is a hairdresser herself, were successful. We have now calculated the costs of equipping a salon and calculated the new project for one year. We are hoping for a positive response and want to start in the new year. Trained young women (and perhaps men in the future) will be able to carry out these activities in their own homes without having to make a large investment and thus contribute to their livelihood. Through an aid project for unemployed young Christian men of the Bethlehem Bible Society (a salary is financed for six months), a young confectioner came to LIFEGATE who has several years of experience in making cakes and tarts and now works for our cafeteria and LIFEGATE Garden. His "sweet temptations" are very popular with many people. We are exploring whether this addition to our wholemeal bakery can find a permanent place at LIFEGATE in the future.



Georg Neumann conducts further training with the LIFEGATE therapy team

Advanced training for our therapy team

Years ago, we were able to recruit Georg Neumann, an experienced physiotherapist from the "Paulustherapie" team (Halle an der Saale), to provide further training for our team. Together with his father Torsten (board member of the "Tor zum Leben - LIFEGATE Rehabilitation" support association and one of two managing directors of "Paulustherapie"), he joined us with his wife and daughter to continue a PNF training course started last year. While Georg provided further training for our therapists, Torsten informed himself about the LIFEGATE project, in the context of which the shelters were also created. We are grateful for this important visit and the wonderful support in these difficult times.



Nada learns once a week in a class at the Talitha-kumi regular school in Beit Jala

A new transport vehicle brings children to LIFEGATE

Every morning and every afternoon, our minibus takes up to twenty children on a round trip to LIFEGATE and back home. It often makes two or three such trips and in between it is used to transport materials and wheelchair users. Our older vehicle has done its duty after twelve intensive years on rather bumpy roads; repair bills have piled up dramatically in the last two years. We have now succeeded in acquiring a new minibus and will soon be putting it into operation. Many children will thus continue to have access to support and development. And we hope to only have to visit the garage for inspections for a long time to come.

Helping in hard times

Since the start of the war in fall 2023, we have been working in the LIFEGATE bakery and kitchen to help people who lack the most basic necessities. Seventy loaves of bread and seventy hot meals leave the facility every day and reach people who can no longer afford to buy much food. We regularly bring used clothes from a Messianic congregation in Jerusalem and also pass them on to the people. This Jewish-Christian congregation also financed fifty blankets for Palestinians who lack everything this winter. We receive donations in kind from a monastery in Jerusalem and can use them to make cloth bags for them.

In 2024, many people were no longer able to pay the monthly contribution for a sponsorship place (€70). A sponsorship place costs LIFEGATE €450 per month and we cover the difference. In school and kindergarten alone, we recorded over € 60,000 in outstanding debts in 2024, money that could no longer be raised by the parents. Many people lost their jobs in tourism, others lost their jobs in Israel. At LIFEGATE, we do not dismiss any children because of their parents' financial problems. On the contrary: we help the families with projects in which they can earn a small income and always try to find solutions. Our donors play a decisive role in this. Thank you very much!

Nada on her way to life

Nada is eight years old and was born with trisomy 21 (Down syndrome). Initially, the girl was quiet and reserved. Today, Nada communicates cheerfully with the other children in her LIFEGATE support group and always asks immediately if a child is absent. Nada smiles a lot and is always ready to help with a task. So far, she speaks short sentences of two to three words. Learning letters and language gives her self-confidence. Nada can distinguish shapes and understands and can handle numbers from one to five. From the second half of 2024, Nada will take part in an inclusion program at a mainstream school in Beit Jala, which LIFEGATE is running together with students from a local university. One student accompanies Nada one day a week in her class at Talitha-kumi School. Nada has now made many friends. Her example is helping to make mainstream schools more and more open to children like Nada. Nada is making her way - and we are learning a lot from her, so we are happy to be infected by her cheerfulness

Your help counts ...!
Thanks to your help we were able to ...

- ...co-finance the promotional work in the last quarter of 2024 (15,000 euros);
- ...start work on the play and adventure garden for children with disabilities (25,000 euros);
- ...provide equipment and funding for ongoing work (30,000 euros).

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

-purchase olive wood for our training workshop and for the production of gift products for 2025 (15,000 euros);
- ... finance the water supply system in LIFEGATE Garden and the roof protection of the building (requirement of the civil protection authorities) (25,000 euros);
- ...offset the external parental contributions that help to finance the work (50,000 euros).

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!