

Lifegate in February 2025

28 intense days lie behind us and, as always, a lot has happened in our country and also at Lifegate. It was a month of many joyful and also many sad moments. People were brought out alive and dead in Gaza, many people mourned the Bibas family (a mother with two small children), who was buried alongside many others and had become a symbol of senseless terror. Freedom of movement for Palestinians has become even more difficult. The fear of radicals on both sides is a constant companion in the country. We know that we are under the "protection of the Most High" and are grateful for the good daily work with its wonderful successes and the protection that we experience every day. February was a month with encouraging encounters and we thank all our friends and guests who have spent time with us, refreshed us and also encouraged us.

Hooray, the first guests

We were delighted to welcome the first group of German visitors for a long time to our Lifegate Garden guest house. Thomas Brendel, retired secretary of the YMCA, from Görlitz, came with a group of 17 people to our country during the coldest days of this rather late winter and, with a lot of love and patience, was able to make the trip a pleasant one even for those participants with a cold and illness. The visit with lunch in our rehabilitation center reminded us of the times almost three years ago when we regularly welcomed guests. Many beautiful "souvenirs" from the German friends will delight us for a long time to come and sweeten our lives. Thank you very much!





The first German visitor group in 2025

Wheelchairs have arrived

The container with aids from Joni and Friends in the USA has arrived in Beit Jala after having overcome many bureaucratic hurdles. Over 200 wheelchairs, walking aids and other aids have been moved to the newly completed storage rooms and are now waiting to be distributed to the people who need them. We are planning wheelchair distributions in April and June this year. We are deeply thankful to our American friends for this "donation in kind", which will help many people to lead a mobile life.



Before we open the container we thank God and ask for His blessing for each aid and the person who will receive it.



Visitors from near and far

The Abbot of the Benedictine Abbey of Dormitio in Jerusalem, Nicodemus, visited us with a delegation from the monasteries (Jerusalem and Tabgha on the Sea of Galilee) to personally hand over a donation from the Christmas campaign "Carry your light to Bethlehem". We are very happy about the close relationship we have had with this order for decades and the opportunity to meet up with Israeli people with disabilities in Tabgha together with our disabled young people!



Abbot Nicodemus (front left) and the delegation from Dormition Abbey

The Lutheran School Talitha Kumi in Beit Jala with its teachers from Germany is not only good customer of the Lifegate wholemeal and sourdough bakery, but is also interested in contact between their pupils and the Lifegate children. Lisa Sych with her class came to a meeting in our special school class and the children had a lot of fun in a jointly designed program. Children from "mainstream schools" thus lose their fear of contact and we hope that these schools will also be open in the future to children with disabilities



Pupils from the Talitha kumi Beit Jala school; guests at Lifegate



We welcomed Jeff and Sharon Futers from Canada, who, with their organization "First Century Foundation", have been supporting us for many years. They were able to get an up-to-date picture of the support work at Lifegate and see the fittings and equipment that they have made possible and that facilitate the practical rehabilitation work. We are delighted about this important bridge to Canada.



Sharon and Jeff Futer's "First Century Foundation" Canada (left)

Pastor Wolfgang Grieb Herrmannstein (below)



Wolfgang Grieb is a pastor in Herrmannstein near Wetzlar and, with his family, has been connected to Lifegate for years. He set out to strengthen his Israeli and Palestinian friends and to hear, see and feel what we have experienced in this country, especially in the last year. Thank you for the wonderful encounter!

Alexander Schick, brother in the Lord, Bible expert, historian, tour operator and leader, outstanding expert on the history of the Middle East has a great love for this country and especially Qumran. He came with a group he organized to visit us for a few days and met with me after the trip. Together with his companion and my friend Georg Rössler, co-partner of SK Tours in the Nature Jerusalem, we discussed possible future trips and encounters. We thank him from the bottom of our hearts for his friendship.

SK Tours and Lifegate have been working together for many years and are able to offer tours to Israel that are tailored to the interests of the "customers".



Alexander Schick examines a fragment of the Book of Jeremiah (Qumran find), Israel Authority Antiquities

Pastor Markus Heide (picture below) runs the Christustreff in Marburg and is therefore also jointly responsible for the Johanniter Hospice in Jerusalem's Old City. The small but very fine guest house, located right next to the 8th station of the Via Dolorosa, is currently run by our friends Elsa and Michael Mohrmann and was already owned by the Order of St. John at the time of the Crusaders. A change of management is due in the fall and Markus came to introduce the interested Gerber family to the tasks and familiarise them with the surroundings. The Johanniter Hospice and its management teams have been closely linked to Lifegate for decades and are a point of contact for both sides for volunteers and guests.



Early support and orientation with the help of pictures

The language development of Lifegate children is very varied and communication can develop in different ways and then only later lead to language. Erik and his colleagues from the early intervention center work with different children using pictures and have developed a plan for this. Individual children use a picture to show what they would like to do or express. We verbalize this wish, the children hear the words and perhaps begin to use them at a certain stage. Pictures also help them to find their bearings. Osaid uses his picture to find his hook for his jacket and bag and Naim finds his place at the table in the group.

Salameh may perhaps never be able to speak properly, but he is learning, with the help of his iPad, to use eye control to look at and click pictures. In this way, he can even play games on the iPad. Since making this discovery, the little boy is very happy. At last he can communicate too.



(from left to right) Erik plans the learning process with pictures, three pictures that a child is already using, Aser shows with a picture card his interest in the "Smarties"



Osaid finds his place at the checkroom, Naim points to his seat in the support group

Salameh controls the computer with his eyes



Our volunteers Renate and Siegfried Trackl finished their six-week stint at the end of February and plan to travel around the country for another 14 days. We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to them for their commitment to the early intervention center, the school and the Lifegate workshops!

We share the great hope and longing of the people for a lasting and just peace in our country and in other war theaters around the world and pray that all violence and the spread of hatred and discord will come to an end. We are privileged to be able to pass on every day the love of Jesus, in words and in deeds, and are careful to remain connected to our source of strength. We ask our friends to stand by us in prayer and in their intercessions towards God and thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Yours, Burghard Schunkert and the Lifegate team



Sunset over Bethlehem

May our living God
Light the fire of his love
in the hearts of the
people!