

SCHNELLER

MAGAZINE ON CHRISTIAN LIFE IN THE MIDDLE EAST



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Interreligious Dialogue

Personal experiences by Jews, Christians and Muslims

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Dear Reader,

“No peace among nations without peace between religions.” How often has this phrase by the Catholic theologian and founder of the *Weltethos* Project, Hans Küng, been quoted? No-one would disagree with him. But how does peace between religions really work in practice?

Against the backdrop of the seemingly endless conflicts in the Middle East, we put this question to Jewish, Muslim and Christian people who are involved in interfaith dialogue and asked them to give us their most personal answers. We received remarkable responses that clearly show how much interfaith dialogue depends on the people who want to engage in it, who allow themselves to be challenged and who, despite all the disappointments, hold on to the idea that all people are equal before God.



Sarah Bernstein from Jerusalem reports on the work of the Rössing Center for Education and Dialogue between Jews, Christians and Muslims. *Yisca Harani* explains why, as a Jew, she is campaigning for religious freedom for Christians in the Holy Land. *Rabbi David Rosen* reports on astonishing developments in dialogue between Jews and Muslims. *Nihal Missaoui* shares her enthusiasm for interfaith dialogue with us. And *Zeina Barakat* presents a study programme at the University of Flensburg where Jews, Christians and Muslims are conducting research jointly. My colleague *Uwe Gräbe* and I also write about our personal experiences in our encounters with Judaism and Islam.

A Schneller magazine would be incomplete without news from the Schneller schools. *Lisa Schnotz* introduces a former Schneller student who is now studying at a well-known university in Jordan. We also welcome *Odetta Haddad Makhoul* as the new director of the Johann Ludwig Schneller School and bid farewell to *Georges Haddad* on his retirement which is more than well-deserved. There has also been a change in management at the Near-East School of Theology in Beirut. President *Martin Accad* succeeds *Georges Sabra* who worked at the NEST for decades.

On behalf of the entire editorial team,
I hope you find this issue a stimulating read. Best regards,

Katja Dorothea Buck

Holding on to hope together

Surveys repeatedly ask the question “What do people believe in?” and – not surprisingly – they find that people’s faith in the German context is no longer expressed in the dogmas of confessional writings. But what if we asked: “What do people hope for?” What are the images that express hope? And what is already making a difference to our hope? The watchword for November paints a picture of hope: heaven, earth, justice – but in a new light. In the light of God’s promise.

When I look back, this is one of the biblical images of hope that has accompanied me since my time as a confirmand: An image for faith that opens up a new horizon. For the hope that endures through grief and tears. For the love that changes everything.

An image that made me discover the promises of the prophets in the Hebrew Bible during my studies, especially in Isaiah. “For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind.” (Isaiah 65:17). An image that gives strength when helplessness threatens to overwhelm a person.

Admittedly, hope cannot simply be fixed in words. And it is certainly not something that can be decreed. It remains intangible. There are moments and destinies when it simply vanishes. It simply has no effect on people any more. And I can’t “preach” it into them either.

Of course, I wonder who can hold on to hope in the face of the constant escalation of violence and war. I can’t speak for others and especially not for our brothers and sisters in the Middle East. But perhaps we can all work at it together – holding on to hope.

Just as it was when the 2nd Epistle of

*But, in accordance
with his promise, we
wait for new heavens
and a new earth,
where righteousness
is at home*

2. Peter 3,13
(Watchword for November 2024)

Peter was written. The “founding generation” of the first communities had died and opponents were challenging them, asking when the hoped-for Second Coming of Christ would come? Peter’s letter is addressed “To those who have received a faith as precious as ours through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ”. (2 Peter 1:1).

Taking it a step further, this could also mean: we hold onto hope together. Perhaps not always all at the same time and even sometimes on another's behalf – I hold on for those who are unable to do so and vice versa. Even though St Peter's letter does not skimp on threats of doom against false prophets, he nevertheless interprets the continued existence of the world as a sign of God's patience. It is not a delay nor a denial of his promise: "The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9). We are therefore called to "live towards" this promise of a new heaven and a new earth.

This has implications for my view of the world, my faith horizon and my actions. And so, for me, the hopeful image of a new heaven and a new earth is also deeply linked to my path in global ecumenism. One thing I have experienced in ecumenism is that it definitely helps when we practice hope across all borders.

From my encounters with people of other contexts, churches and faith traditions, I have learnt that a sliver of this hope becomes visible, concrete and tangible. When people in the EMS Fellowship share their stories and struggles, and when lament and praise resound in many voices and languages during a church service. When we take an interest in each other, really listen and put up with differences. When a participant says after a partnership trip: I've realised that we in Germany are not the navel of the world. When people write: We can't say often

enough how important your prayers from the other side of the world are for us. So then we hope together and it becomes apparent what the new heaven and the new earth could be like, the place where justice abides.

Kurt Marti puts it like this and gets to the heart of what surveys cannot possibly reveal:

The heaven that is, is not the heaven that's coming when heaven and earth are no more.

The heaven that is coming is when the Lord comes, when the rulers of the earth are gone.

The heaven that is coming is the world free from suffering, where violence and misery are defeated.

The heaven that is coming is the city of joy and the God with the face of man.

The heaven that is coming already greets the earth, which is when love transforms life.
(Protestant Hymn Book 153)

Reverend Anne Heitmann is a Church Councillor of the Protestant Church in Baden and heads the Department of Ecumenism and Church Worldwide. She also holds the position of Deputy Chair of the Evangelical Mission in Solidarity

It's like trying to climb Mount Everest without any training

Dialogue During War

We often say “Choose life” really glibly. But to choose life means choosing life when things get tough. It means choosing life even if that means we're going to have to make concessions, even if it's going to be painful and difficult. I used to think it was something terribly easy. This war has made me understand what it really means. It means that the most fundamental commandment is that we choose life – that we stop killing each other.

There are 12 million people between the river and the sea. The reality is that

muscles and endurance, or your ability to listen to things that are hard or painful to process – then when times get tough, you're ready and you can do it.

My first real experience of dialogue was in a women's dialogue group that I set up in 2000. Mixed groups weren't giving me or other women what we were looking for. Men were looking to debate, and women were looking to connect with each other, to build relationships. Women wanted dialogue, and men kept getting in the way. So I set up a women's dialogue programme. It lasted through the Second In-


I have put before you life and death. Choose life, so that you and your

no one's going anywhere. We have to work out a way to live together. I believe that this diversity is an enriching and positive thing. We are blessed to have this incredible diversity of religions, cultures, and identities. Our job is to celebrate it, not kill each other over it.

In order to do that, we need dialogue. It's easier said than done. Trying to create dialogue during war is like trying to climb Mount Everest without any training. You can't start without experience or preparation. But if you develop your skills – your

tifada, and, despite all the violence, we were still going in and out of each other's neighborhoods to meet.

One of the most moving and significant meetings we had, was on Jerusalem and its future. I was surprised that everybody wanted to share Jerusalem. No one wanted to divide the city or have the whole thing for themselves. Everyone understood that Jerusalem needed to be shared. That remains a source of inspiration for me to this day. That's what we should be doing: learning to share.



There were also difficult moments. It's always painful to be exposed to painful truths. People will get upset or offended, but then they'll have a chance to say why they're hurt or what they find difficult. We can talk about it. If we are not prepared to be offended, if we're not prepared to be hurt, then we're not going to get anywhere. Then we can't have a real conversation, and I believe in real conversations.

We all want to hear what we agree with. Well, tough. That's not always possible. We have to hear things we profoundly disagree with. But listening isn't going to

The verse in the Bible that I use most to reflect on my work is from Psalm 85. The rough translation is. "Hesed and truth meet, justice and peace have kissed." Hesed can translate to loving kindness, grace, compassion, or empathy. Truth on its own can be harsh, so it needs to be paired and hesed. And justice and peace have to go together, because peace inherently includes justice. The absence of violence is not peace, and violence won't be absent for long without justice.

Throughout this war, my life has been one of holding both the pain of Palestin-

ath, blessing and curse. r descendants may live. (Deuteronomy 30,19)

kill us. I can hear someone say something I disagree with, and it doesn't mean that I have to stop talking to them.

Not everyone at the Rossing Center agrees on everything. That's OK. Because at the end of the day we agree on our vision: Everybody has to have equal rights, has to have citizenship of some country, and has to be treated as equal citizens in that country. As long as we agree on that, we can work together. As we do.

ians and Israelis, hesed and truth, justice and peace. What gives me hope is that if we can do it at the Rossing Center, it can be done everywhere. We're the microcosm of what we're trying to create for everyone else. In a way, I'm lucky – I get to live it where everybody else isn't. Together, we are choosing life.

Dr Sarah Bernstein is the Executive Director of the interreligious peacebuilding organization "The Rossing Center for Education and Dialogue" founded in Jerusalem in 2006. <https://rossingcenter.org>



Protecting the dignity of people of other faiths

The duty to engage in dialogue and protect religious freedom

The Jewish Israeli Yisca Harani has been involved in interfaith dialogue for 30 years and has organized countless encounters between Jews and Christians. Now she is focusing her efforts on the religious freedom of the Christian minority in Israel. .

Growing up in an observant Jewish family, who had plenty of amicable relations with non-Jewish people in Israel and abroad, had an enormous impact on my perception of life. The message of unity of people regardless of their creed was a given, and so was the perception of Jerusalem (where I grew up) and Israel, as multi religious habitats by nature.

As a young woman, I decided to study religions and to concentrate on those with whom I had less familiarity – especially with Christianity. As a student, I was already involved in activities where I passed on my knowledge of other religions to others: I was a guide, and thus exposed Jewish Israelis to non-Jewish sites and communities, without framing them as “inter religious”. It was exciting to try to understand and make others understand “the others”. Through the teaching experience I realized the challenges and difficulties of Israeli Jews to be ‘academically

objective’ or mere ‘observers’ to this material. I encountered fascination and amazement with some, while with others – resentment and rejection.

Disillusionment from my paradisaical childhood perception of “unity of all believers” was soon to come: alongside roundtables and interfaith activities I witnessed also antagonism, frictions and conflicts. The secular Jews and the progressive believers were ignorant but extremely curious about Christianity. The religious Jews in general bore negativity and anger while ‘hardcore orthodox’ refused to learn the subject.

Despite this range of reactions, I was determined to create opportunities of interaction: inviting Christians to Jewish homes especially during feast days, initiating multi-year programs for Jewish, Christian and Muslim pupils, inviting Christian speakers to talk about their faith and traditions in different study forums, visits to monasteries, holy sites and charity Church institutions. I had an ardent desire to teach a religion with which I had much in common and yet a deep divide.

In my own experience I felt that deepening the knowledge of another religion



Security within thy palaces | 9x 122

is shaping and “sharpening” my own religious identity. Instructing Jewish people about Christianity made me more Jewish, although at times the additional challenge was dispelling Jewish suspicions and Christian disappointments that I am a no convert.

I have lived all my life in Israel, and as the years went by, I witnessed the rapidly growing diverse societies of Jewish Orthodoxy. The circumstances leading to the change in nationalism and Jewish exclusivism, are not my concern here. The outcome does! In the last 20 years, religious Israeli communities, who never encountered Christians (except in historical memory) held the historical resentment which at times turned to animosity. A

small number diverted the animosity into actions, but those were ignored or overlooked by Israeli society and by the authorities. Harassment such as abusive graffiti, verbal offence, spitting, vandalism etc., was seen as no more than “bad apples”.

But this was not anymore a marginal matter. The rising numbers of Christian pilgrims and the ever-growing number of Orthodox Jews visiting Jerusalem (and other sites) brought up the statistics of unfortunate incidents. Some of these incidents were caught by cameras and raised world condemnations.

It was at this point that I had shifted my energy from interfaith activism to what

Yisca Harani



Impossible to overlook: Jewish volunteers in high-visibility waistcoats accompany Christian processions.

seemed like necessity: to fight against this phenomenon. Since 2013, I organized multiple activities in relation to a desecrated protestant cemetery in Jerusalem. A volunteer's human watch, to escort Christian processions operates weekly until to date. June 2023, together with three Israeli universities, I set up an academic conference about the phenomenon of spitting. The conference was condemned and ignored by the authorities but hit the headlines and over a hundred Christian religious arrived.

During this conference I launched the Religious Freedom Data Center (RFDC) for



Yisca Harani

Yisca Harani greets a nun in one of the lanes of Jerusalem's old town.

documenting anti-Christian actions. The center receives data through a telephone hotline and through volunteers who are assigned to each Christian institution in Israel. Weekly contact with the Christians supplies the data and the center publishes monthly reports and files complaints to the police and other authorities. The Center is not affiliated with any governmental institution or political body and is financed by private citizens only.

On October 7th, our world turned upside down and the war in Gaza began. For one month our RFDC froze. Tourism completely stopped, Israelis hardly left their homes, Christians hesitated to contact us. We reached out, explaining that despite the grim times that the region is undergoing, we remain committed to our goals. Our mission and determination remain to follow up on any disruption of religious dignity.

Even under the dire circumstances of war, when voluntary work is needed in other fields and I have to divide my time between all, the duty of safeguarding religious freedom and dignity is a not to be compromised. It is my Jewish duty, and in time – the interfaith dialogue and action will resume as well.

Yisca Harani

The Religious Freedom Data Center

„The Religious Freedom Data Center“ (RFDC) has been collecting information on attacks on Christians and Christian symbolism in Israel since June 2023. Anyone who has witnessed or been the victim of such an attack can contact a hotline.

By collecting this data, the RFDC aims to raise awareness among the Israeli authorities and the population about the situation and violations of religious freedom among the Christian minority, which makes up around two per cent of the population in Israel. The reports are published regularly on the center's website.

www.report-hotline-jlm.co.il

Against prejudice and in favor of mutual respect

Reflections on Jewish-Muslim relations in the Middle East

The Middle East conflict may paint a different picture, but in recent years, there have been astonishing developments between Judaism and Islam at an international level, says Rabbi David Rosen, who has been personally involved in many of the milestones in this process.


Modern times since the middle of the last century have seen a dramatic transformation for the good in Jewish-Christian relations. Aside from the widespread Christian repudiation of Antisemitism, ideas that were prevalent throughout most of Christian history – e.g. that Jews have been rejected by God, that they are in league with the devil, that they are a conspiracy of evil, that they poison the wells and murder innocent children – are not only vigorously repudiated, but are hardly even known to most young Christians today.

However, in something of an historical paradox, these ideas have been commonly found over the last century in a religious culture in which they had largely been foreign beforehand – namely, the Muslim world. These ideas have been generated overwhelmingly by the political conflict in the Holy Land, which even though it is a territorial conflict of nationalisms, nevertheless involves peoples with identities deeply rooted in a religious ethos and history.

In recent times, religious attachments have increasingly been used both to bol-

ster the claims of each side, and all too often to denigrate those of the other. As a result, we may say that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been increasingly “religionized”, and this has been terribly evident on the latest tragic war between Hamas and Israel. This trend is extremely dangerous and threatens to engulf us all in the region, and perhaps even beyond, in an ever-increasing cycle of bloodshed and suffering.

Yet despite it all, there have been some significant positive developments in Muslim-Jewish relations in recent times, which hold out significant hope. Some Arab countries had been engaged for many years in such endeavor – Morocco being arguably the most prominent in this regard. However, well before the Abraham Accords in 2020 a significant change in orientation had taken place in the leadership within the Arab world. They increasingly understood that Antisemitic propaganda did not really serve their interests, neither internally and certainly not internationally.

In 2008, the previous king of Saudi Arabia, Abdulla bin Abdulaziz, gathered representatives from across the Muslim world to support his interfaith initiative to advance global interreligious dialogue and collaboration. This was followed by the first ever Saudi initiated multi-faith conference held in Madrid co-hosted by King Abdullah and the King of Spain, Juan Carlos. And I was honored to be one of rabbis invited. 

This was followed up by an event at the UN to which Abdullah invited both religious leaders and heads of state, including the late Shimon Peres; and a culmination two years later in the establishment of the remarkable King Abdullah International Center for interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID), together with the governments of Spain and Austria, and supported by the Holy See. I was honored to serve as the Jewish member of its founding Board of Directors.

The programs that KAICIID initiated and continues to run are impressive in themselves; but for me the most important value of my involvement, was the opportunity to interact with Saudi religious (as well as political) leaders who I would not have met personally otherwise, and to contribute to overcoming the misunderstandings, prejudices, and negative stereotypes, on which they had been fed for so long.

Saudi Arabia under King Salman and the Crown Prince Mohammed have continued to support this interfaith dialogue, and I was also honored to be received together with my colleagues on the KAICIID Board by King Salman in the royal palace in Riyadh. I believe I am the first rabbi and Israeli to ever be so received. However, during this regnum, Saudi interfaith efforts have been primarily directed by the man they appointed as the new head of the Muslim World League (MWL) in 2016, Dr. Mohammed Abdelkarim Al-Issa.

The MWL had long been the vehicle of international dissemination of an extreme and exclusive version of Islam, commonly known as Wahabbism. Now under Al Issa, a complete turnaround took place in the MWL, repudiating the nar-



Abrahamic Family House

The Abrahamic Family House complex was designed by the C

row-minded orientation and pursuing an active outreach to other religious communities, even hosting a multi-faith conference in Riyadh for the first time in May 2022, which included a dozen rabbis from Europe and the US, I, being the only one invited from Israel.

As the International Director of Interreligious Affairs of the American Jewish Committee (AJC), I was honored to join with my colleagues in hosting Al Issa and some fifty Muslim leaders from around the world in a pilgrimage to the death camps at Auschwitz-Birkenau in 2020 on the 75th anniversary of their liberation. The event had a profound impact on Al Issa and he continues to speak about it, and is strongly outspoken against Holocaust denial.

The AJC together with other Jewish agencies have made efforts in recent years to remove the very offensive materials in the Saudi educational system in relation not only to Jews but also towards Christians. The dramatic changes in the Saudi Ministry of Education in the last years have led to an impressive overhaul in their



Iranian-British architect David Adjaye. Synagogue, mosque and church – no one building dominates the others.

educational materials, and today all of the offensive passages have been removed and replaced by a constructive and respectful approach towards Judaism and Christianity.

While the United Arab Emirates' (UAE) interfaith outreach began a little later, it swiftly overtook the rest of the Arab world. These were evidenced both in their educational developments and in the establishment of government initiatives to promote interfaith and intercultural tolerance and to combat radicalism and extremism.

A major boost to this process came with the visit of Pope Francis to Abu Dhabi in 2019 where he signed a Declaration on Human Fraternity with the Grand Imam of al-Azhar, at a large gathering attended by representatives of the faiths from around the world. In celebration of this, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed of the UAE announced that they would build a complex where there would be three houses of worship in the vicinity of one another – a mosque, a church, and a synagogue – to demonstrate their commitment to this

religious diversity and mutual respect, and this complex would also advance interfaith understanding locally and in the world. This Abrahamic Family House was launched last year in the presence of leading Sheikhs, Cardinals and Chief Rabbis, and the complex receives tens of thousands of visitors from around the world.

Undoubtedly, the barbaric attack of Hamas last October 7th and the ongoing war in Gaza leading to such awful loss of life and the suffering on both sides, has had a seriously negative impact on this process and many initiatives have been placed “on hold” as a result. However, I am convinced that this process of Jewish-Muslim reconciliation will continue to advance and flourish and bring blessing to both faith communities and to the world at large.

For 22 years, Rabbi David Rosen was the Jerusalem based International Director of Interreligious affairs of the American Jewish Committee from which he took leave last year to serve as Special Advisor to the Abrahamic Family House.

Our “Amen” to the same psalms

Grounded in Jewish-Christian encounters

Why is it so difficult for me to write this article, even though the topic has been central for me for around 40 years? I should mention that the majority of my Jewish friends are Israelis – citizens of the country that has officially been in a state of war with Lebanon for decades. And it’s no secret that people are sometimes refused entry to Lebanon because they have posted pictures of their visits to Israel on social media. This makes things complicated when you have to visit Lebanon once or twice a year on business and you also have good friends there who you don’t want to get into trouble.

This introduction alone may show that Jewish-Christian encounters are not an innocuous topic in a “magazine about Christian life in the Middle East”. So, what sort of Jewish-Christian encounters should I actually write about? About the retired Reform rabbi friend, a human rights activist, with whom I mostly talk about the science fiction series we both share a great interest in? About the architect who strives to preserve Christian buildings in Jerusalem, who takes to the streets week after week in increasing desperation to demonstrate against the extremist government in Israel, but who has almost given up all hope for his state? Or about the retired diplomat’s wife, who also fears for the existence of Israel, but who votes right-wing precisely for this reason and regularly tries to convince me that only “Bibi” Netanyahu can save Israel?

But perhaps I should simply tell you about the Israeli colleague here in Germa-

ny, who sometimes wants to crumble under the heaps of resentment that is poured here on his country, but then never stops telling me about his grandfather who, as a doctor in Galilee, treated Jews and Arabs alike without distinction – even and especially if the person had no money – with the result that his memory is still held in great honour in the local Palestinian community to this day.

As different as these people are – some religious, others not so much – none of them would question one thing: that they all belong to the “Am Israel”, the “Jewish people”, and not merely to a religious community. To a people that has a close relationship to that stretch of land between the Mediterranean and the Jordan based on biblical faith – without necessarily implying anything about political claims or concrete borders. Yes, I know, many of my Lebanese friends (and others too) will already disagree with me here, perhaps even claiming that today’s Jews have nothing at all to do ethnically with the biblical people of Israel, and for that reason alone they cannot be a nation. Perhaps they will even cite as key witnesses Jews of the calibre of Judith Butler or representatives of the extreme, ultra-Orthodox sect of the Neturei Karta.

But that doesn’t work, especially not from a post-colonial viewpoint. The Jewish theologian Susannah Heschel once called for a “decolonisation of Judaism”: like all communities, Jews also have the right to define their own identity instead of being defined from the outside – for example by a Christian church which then



Remembering a happy shabbat evening with Rabbi Levi Weiman-Kelman and his wife Paula (front centre) in Jerusalem, to which Uwe Gräbe (3rd from left) had also taken his colleagues from the EMS and EVS, Kerstin Sommer and Katja Dorothea Buck (left) as well as Dieter Heidtmann (behind Gräbe).

goes on to exploit individual dissenting voices from within the Jewish community for its own purposes.

Of course, ethnically, the Jewish people are an exceptionally mixed bunch, as you can see at first glance on Israeli streets. Some have joined this community since biblical times – and yet they have entered into an ongoing continuity. “Like a link in the chain from the past to the future that has always been a part of me,” sings Barbra Streisand in the musical “Yentl”.

As a religious person, I particularly like to connect with those in the community who are as religious in their own Jewish way as I am in my Christian way. And I’m happy to put up with the occasional ‘rebuff’; for example, when Jewish and Muslim dialogue partners join forces and mutually reinforce each other in their crystal-clear monotheism, whereas with

a Christian like myself, you never know whether I’m not ‘associating’ some human elements to the divine, just as I literally load things containing pork onto my plate that don’t belong there. I can bear it because I know I’ll be able to return to the synagogue next Friday evening with my Jewish dialogue partner. There we’ll welcome Shabbat together and conclude the same psalms with our “Amen”.

Uwe Gräbe

I am grateful for Islam

Personal experiences from encounters with Muslims

Being open and curious can be a good way to start an interreligious dialogue. But you also need a solid foundation if you don't want to end up retreating into your personal space when the other religion becomes a bit challenging. At least that is what Katja Dorothea Buck has personally experienced.

My first encounter with "Islam" was in the third grade. Gamze, who was what we called a child from a Turkish guest worker family, sat next to me in class and was at least as good as me in German and maths. In sports, she was even better than me. We knew we were born to different religions but that didn't matter at all. We liked each other. After fourth grade, I moved to grammar school. Gamze didn't. We lost sight of each other. When I was about to finish school, the rumour was she had been sent back to Anatolia to get married.


I, in turn, went to Paris to spend a di-
aconal year in a care home for the elderly. Most of my colleagues there came from Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. I made many friends there too. For a while, we lived together in a residential home, cooked together and talked our heads off about God and the world. We were privileged to meet on neutral ground, so to speak. France was not our homeland for any of us.

We discussed the fact that we had different views on gender roles and religion but it didn't become a bone of contention, thank goodness! This allowed me to experience what Ramadan means in everyday life and how important the five prayer

times were. I was impressed by the consistency with which my friends lived their faith. I almost envied them how clearly they could say what was right and what was wrong before God.

I am eternally grateful to them because they are the reason why I chose to major in religious studies with a specialisation in Islam rather than Protestant theology. I wanted to know more about Islam, to be able to read the Koran in the original and, above all, to understand where all the prejudices against Muslims in Europe come from.

My studies took me to Cairo for a year, where, as a Christian, I was now faced with an overwhelming and very self-confident Muslim majority. As a young Euro-



The domes of the mosques in Cairo are beautifully silhouetted against the light of the setting sun.

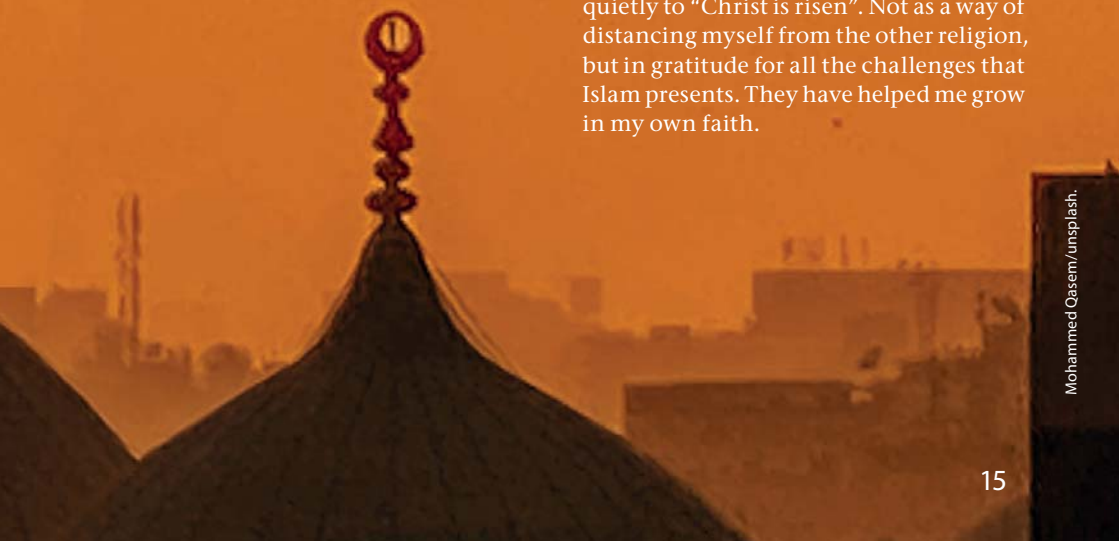
pean woman, I also had a special status in Egyptian society. My openness and curiosity towards others were quickly misunderstood as an interest in having closer relationships. It was a painful experience for me learning to put up boundaries between myself and others.

Islam, which I had previously encountered in friendships, was suddenly perceived as a challenge in everyday Egyptian life. The university canteen and all the street snack bars closed during Ramadan. For me, it felt like a forced obligation to fast. The nearby mosque turned up the loudspeakers for the call to prayer (adhan) even louder than usual. My anger grew with every decibel.

I actually quite liked the adhan and enjoyed listening to the somewhat strange-sounding melody. But now I felt under attack and provoked. I retaliated by listening to oratorios and motets by Bach and Mendelssohn as loudly as possible through the headphones of my old Walkman. I rediscovered myself to this music. That was “mine”.

But one question kept nagging at me. Interreligious encounters obviously require more than just a little openness and curiosity. It also needs a solid foundation from which you can approach another person. But what was my foundation? It couldn't be retreating into my own personal space and listening to familiar music. Some nights I couldn't sleep, brooding and ruminating, feeling incapable of surviving just one more day in this challenging city. The brooding only stopped when the muezzins softly and gently called to prayer at the first light of dawn. I knew that not all Muslims would be getting up now to turn towards Mecca. But I found it comforting that a sleeping city was reminded to pray to God at this early hour.

Decades later, I learnt from Klaus Schulten, the church musician who has played on many organs in the Middle East, that one of the most common melodies of the adhan is in the Dorian modal key, the same key as, for example, the wonderful Easter hymn “Christ is risen”. Since then, I've enjoyed listening to the adhan even more. And when I'm travelling in Jerusalem, Beirut, Cairo or Amman and a muezzin calls to prayer, I sometimes sing along quietly to “Christ is risen”. Not as a way of distancing myself from the other religion, but in gratitude for all the challenges that Islam presents. They have helped me grow in my own faith.



How I found my *ummah*

When dialogue becomes a beacon of hope

Interreligious dialogue plays a central role in Nihal Missaoui's life – professionally, at university and in her private life. This is because, in her experience, encountering and exchanging ideas with others helps you grow in your own faith.

It all started with a friendship with a fellow student I met in my first semester. He was a Catholic Christian studying Catholic theology; I was a Muslim studying Islamic religious education. Our conversations quickly centred around our faith, our ideas of God, but also our criticism of our respective faith communities or institutions. We often sat together with our holy scriptures, read together and compared notes, talking literally about God and the world – and how we viewed it from the perspective of our two religions. Today we are best friends. In addition to our deep friendship, we are also united by our faith, even if we don't belong to the same religion. This is because every time we talk, we come to the same conclusion – our love for God and our love for his creation are no different.

In a world where there is so much prejudice against Islam and Muslims, I wanted to do my part to break down these prejudices and – like my best friend and I – bring people closer together through faith. Together with a friend, I organised an interfaith fast-breaking event for the first time in our hall of residence in Münster during Ramadan 2016 and this has now become a tradition. This event has proven to be a special opportunity to build bridges and break down prejudices. When we

break our fast together, we not only share food but also stories, traditions and values.

Over the years, the encounters and conversations have taught me a lot about the beliefs, traditions and practices of my fellow human beings, be they Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu or atheist. But most importantly, I was able to learn something about myself. Every encounter has led me to look at my own faith in a new light and how I live it. The questions and viewpoints of other believers have made me think more deeply about my own faith and brought me to question aspects that I may have taken for granted and never really thought about. They asked me questions that challenged me and for which I didn't have an immediate answer, and that sometimes made me doubt myself. Ultimately, however, they helped me grow stronger in my faith and find a deep, intimate connection to my religion and my belief in God.

One of the most important realisations is the importance of community. Islam repeatedly emphasises the importance of the *ummah*, the community of believers and the solidarity and connection between them. Through the interfaith encounters, connections and friendships that have grown from this, I have realised that this community is not limited to Muslims but that we humans form a large, global community. We are responsible for each other, regardless of religious affiliation or origin.

Especially in times when global conflicts give the impression that our reli-



Nihal Missaoui

gions divide us from one another, it is all the more important for me to breathe life into this community and to keep strengthening our solidarity. Despite the differences between our religions, I realise time and again during interfaith encounters that we have much more in common and that we are united by our love of God, our love of people and our longing for a peaceful world.

In a society where the headlines are full of division, distrust, provocation and fear, my interfaith community is like a beacon for me, a light of hope to guide me. It reminds me that we can build bridges and remember that we are all part of one big community and part of creation, and that by showing mutual respect, understanding and solidarity, we can create a more harmonious and peaceful world.

Nihal Missaoui is studying history and Islamic religious education at the University of Münster. She is also involved in an interfaith research project.

Fast-breaking is a pleasure for body and soul – but also an opportunity for interreligious dialogue.

With heart, mind and interreligious expertise

The Wasatia Graduate School in Flensburg focuses on dialogue

The Wasatia graduate program at Europa-Universität Flensburg brings together Jews, Christians and Muslims from various conflict regions, including Israel and Palestine. They not only research solutions together, but also seek out interfaith encounters with their fellow students in order to become fit as individual personalities for complicated moderation processes.

Peace only has a chance when truth, justice and reconciliation come together." What sounds so simple and convincing is often extremely complicated to realize. The best-known example of this is the Middle East conflict. It can be discussed on a legal level, analyzed in terms of its political dimensions and religious factors can be identified. This has



also been done diligently for decades in diplomatic circles, at universities, in editorial offices, on social media and in many places in living rooms and at private desks.

But reconciliation does not happen on paper or at negotiating tables. Reconciliation happens through people. And they have a heart as well as a mind. They bring their different experiences, trauma, convictions and sometimes prejudices with them.

The Wasatia Graduate School at the Europa-Universität Flensburg focuses pre-

cisely on this and, in addition to all the academic aspects required for a doctoral program, also takes the mental component into account. People are not only objects of studies, but also subjects of negotiation. In other words: Anyone who enrolls on this doctoral program at the Europa-Universität Flensburg must be prepared to get themselves wet.

The importance of recognizing the suffering of others in a reconciliation process is not only discussed in theory, but also experienced in practice. A joint visit to the Holocaust memorial in Auschwitz-Birkenau is therefore a must. Students must also be prepared to deconstruct entrenched narratives and practice interreligious tolerance. This includes, for

Religion can be a powerful platform for promoting dialogue and reconciliation.

TEE HODAJ, ALBANIA

example, joint participation in a course on biblical argumentation at the University of Cambridge, where Jewish, Christian and Muslim texts are interpreted and discussed.

The doctoral program is based on an initiative by Jerusalem politics professor Mohammed S. Dajani Daoudi, who is considered one of the great visionaries for a peaceful future for Palestinians and Israelis. (See Schneller Magazine 1-2024, p.



The new students at the Wasatia Graduate School. A total of 23 young men and women from different countries are currently preparing their doctorates on conflict resolution strategies in Flensburg. Centre: School Director, Prof. Dr. Ralf Wüstenberg; on his left, Dr. Zeina Barakat, Executive Director..

18-21 and Schneller Magazine 4-2021, p. 14-15). The Arabic term ‘wasatia’, which is translated as ‘center’ or ‘middle way’, can also be read with its religious-ethical connotation. In this case, ‘wasatia’ implies moderation, balance and justice. These virtues characterize the philosophy of the Wasatia Graduate School, which was established four years ago at the Europa-Universität in Flensburg. The academic director is the Protestant theology professor Ralf Wüstenberg.

The Wasatia Research Training Group works on an interdisciplinary and inter-religious basis. Its central aim is to train competent multipliers who can build

bridges between historical analysis and theoretical reflection and realpolitik solutions in concrete conflicts. In short, it is about training future leaders who

The Wasatia program has deepened my understanding of reconciliation, especially in the context of the Middle East conflict.

STEPHEN OPONDO, KENIA



Screenshot aus NDR-Reportage

Nemer Shaheen has recently managed to flee from the Gaza Strip and is now meeting Israeli Aviram Bellaïshe in Flensburg. Both of them want to play their part in promoting understanding.

will work in diplomacy and international peace and reconciliation work with heart, mind and interreligious competence to find sustainable conflict solutions.

The current 23 doctoral students have very different academic, family and biographical backgrounds and come from various conflict regions around the world. In exchange with German and international students, they are working on comparative studies on trauma, hostility,

Participants from Judaism, Christianity and Islam reflected together on their sacred texts. This promotes mutual understanding.

HANI SMIRAT, PALESTINE

At a time of increasing global division and intolerance, this project is an example of a better way forward.

JEREMIAH SCHMIDT, GERMANY

conflicts and reconciliation processes in regions such as Northern Ireland, South Africa and the Balkans. The two participants from Israel and Palestine, Aviram Bellaïshe and Nemer Shaheen, were featured in a report by Norddeutscher Rundfunk in May this year that is well worth watching. (Short URL: <https://t1p.de/i4qy7>)

Dr Zeina Barakat, Executive Director of the Wasatia Graduate School in collaboration with Katja Dorothea Buck.

“In Schneller God’s love is passed on to everyone”

Interview with the new director of the Johann Ludwig Schneller School

For the first time in the Schneller history a woman has been given the position of the director of one of the Schneller Schools. Odette Haddad Makhoul was elected by the local board in June. For her it’s like coming home.

In Lebanon there are a lot of private Christian schools. Why did you choose Schneller for your career?

I was born in Schneller. My father was an educator there and later he became the head of the boarding department. I was brought up in Schneller and went to school there till grade nine. But as my family still lived there, Schneller stayed my home even during my college and study time.

Have you ever worked in another school than Schneller?

I started working as an English teacher at Schneller in 1987. During the crisis in 2017 I had to leave for five years and worked at another school. Thank God I could come back to Schneller two years ago. It felt like a blessing to me.

What do you like most at Schneller?

It’s hard to say. I love all, all the kids, everyone. It’s so great to see how they develop, how they become men and women. It’s a real privilege to see the graduates when they come back to their school and thank us all. I am proud of all of them.



JLS

Is there any child who you remember most?

Most of them come from underprivileged families. And when you see how they develop, you see that each of them is special. I remember for example one who came back from Saudi-Arabia to visit us. It’s so great to see how successful he is now in his life.

How would you describe what makes Schneller unique?

It’s the bond between the children and the educators, between the teachers and the children, between everyone at Schneller. It’s a place of love, where God’s love is passed on to everybody. There is nothing like Schneller.

The Johann Ludwig Schneller School is a Lebanese institution belonging to the National Evangelical Church in Beirut. But due to its history it has a certain German legacy and is supported by a lot of donors in Germany and Switzerland. I assume that they would love to know more about the person who is now in charge of leading this institution. Would you like to tell us a bit about your personal background? ►

I am married and I have three children, two sons and one daughter. My eldest son lives in New York, my daughter is in London, and our youngest one lives with us in Beirut. I studied English literature at the Lebanese University in Zahle.

What are in your eyes the greatest challenges the institution is facing?

It's the financial crisis in Lebanon. As a school we depend on donations and when there is a shortage of money, we feel this. We always think about how to protect the kids and the staff. For example, the price for gasoline or gas went extremely high. But we need it to keep the kids warm. And we have to feed them good.

And what about the political situation?

I can't predict the future. But we are in an extremely instable situation. We keep hearing people saying, "In the fall there will be a big thing," and then in the fall,



Selfie with the Director: the Schneller School is home for Odette Haddad Makhoul. She wants to pass this on to the children and young adults.



Christian presence against the backdrop of Mount Lebanon.

when nothing happens, they say "I am sure, in winter there will be something big happening." Planning for the future is extremely hard, especially when you are responsible for an institution.

Imagine Schneller in ten years. How do you wish it will be there?

I hope everything stays the same in a better way. I hope that we will have vocational training for girls, that we will have more boarding students and more classes, also high classes.

You are the first woman in charge at Schneller in all the Schneller history. Will there be some differences because a woman is now leading the institution?

I don't think so. Of course, it's historic that the board has elected a woman to this position. And I am thankful that they trust in me. But I don't have to prove that now everything will be better because I



Charbel Karam/unsplash

am a woman. No, I just want to do a good job. And if things change for the better, I will be grateful for it.

Till now all directors at Schneller were Reverends. You are not a theologian. What does it mean for chapel or the worship service at church?

This is a very important point. Because the worship service is a core element of Schneller. I know it by my own experience. When I was a child, I regularly went to chapel in the evening. And I feel now that there was something very important planted in me. After the summer break we have to discuss this issue carefully in the local board. To keep the high level of chapel and worship service at Schneller is one of my priorities.

Katja Dorothea Buck conducted the interview.

Schneller Foundation funds boarding home furnishings in Amman

Stuttgart/EVS. The Board of Trustees of the *Schneller Foundation – Education for Peace* unanimously decided at its meeting that €20,000 should be transferred from last year's income to the Theodor Schneller School to furnish the boarding home rooms after the general refurbishment of the buildings has been completed. The idea is to paint the rooms in suitable colours for the children's ages and genders, and to provide high-quality bedding, curtains, pictures and large mirrors. These were things that the children and young people mentioned as important in a joint workshop with the architects so that they would feel comfortable in the new rooms.

The remaining €10,000 of the foundation's income will be allocated to the free reserves. Since the changes in interest and exchange rates have been rather unfavourable for foundations, no funds were passed on to the two schools last year. On a positive note, however, a good €100,000 was donated in 2023. Net fixed assets now stand at €2.64 million. Fortunately, interest rates are again on the rise.

The end of an era

George Haddad hands over a house in good order

Reverend George Haddad has been Director of the Johann Ludwig Schneller School (JLSS) in Lebanon since 2006. Now he is retiring and leaving behind an organisation that is in good shape despite all the crises that surround it.

Suit. Tie. A brisk stride across the courtyard. Suddenly he bends down and picks up the only sweet wrapper flying around far and wide and takes it to the rubbish bin. Everyone sees it – and hopefully understands the message behind it. No matter what form the long-term crisis in Lebanon takes, if we stop paying attention to the little things, we would eventually lose everything. Later, he measures exactly how much heating oil the supplier pumped into the tank. Fraud is a plague that poisons us all, he says. Or he disappears into the control cabinet of the new photovoltaic system to check the amount of electricity being fed into the grid.

Otherwise he's adjusting the router settings for the internet, calming a distraught father who can no longer pay for his son's transportation to school, or keeping track of how the Johann Ludwig Schneller School (JLSS) is actually doing financially in his parallel accounting system – a perennial question since the mandated system, with its state-imposed 'official' exchange rates, only supplies highly inadequate information. That's how I got to know Reverend George Haddad.

In 2006, he took over as Director of the JLSS: he is an all-rounder, fulfilling

his duty even as far as the threshold of pain. Now he would reply, "No, I'm just a Schneller alumnus." Indeed, he actually attended primary school here. In those days, learning many practical skills was simply part of life "at Schneller". Now he is leaving the school and going into retirement – roughly two and a half years after the official retirement age. This is also a reflection of his sense of duty, and he has repeatedly emphasised how important it is to him to not miss the right moment to say farewell.

Before he became director, he had already had an exciting career behind him – as deputy manager of a Christian bookshop in Bahrain, school chaplain and teacher in Nabatiyeh in southern Lebanon, pastor at the Anglican All Saints Church in Beirut – which he saved from the bulldozers after the civil war and then had it restored in the midst of brand new tower blocks.

At the JLSS, he came full circle. He implemented and initiated so many things here: the construction of an energy-efficient water supply and heating system; a photovoltaic system; numerous new training programmes; admitting large numbers of Syrian refugee children and their mothers who learned the tailoring trade here; setting up new training workshops for carpenters, industrial electricians and recently even servicing electric cars.

No one was allowed to drive a wedge between Christian, Muslim and Druze children. Everyone always came together



Solar panels for the JLSS – that was one of George Haddad’s many innovations. He is framed here by Uwe Gräbe and EVS Chairwoman Kerstin Sommer.

for prayers at the church. And whenever enthusiastic musicians came to the region, he invited them to organise a music project with the students. He even ended up playing the organ that was installed in the church in 2017 himself.

He was always accompanied by his wife Laure, with whom he lived in the small director’s house on the edge of the Schneller site after their two children Stephanie and Daniel had emigrated to the USA. Countless friends and friends of friends have experienced the charming host couple here. That’s when the strict director’s tie came off, when the best Schneller wine was served and finally when the hostess dished out her home-baked fruit cake. Then there was plenty of laughter, but also some deep conversations about religion and politics, about our faith and about the hope that sustains us.

The Evangelical Association for the Schneller Schools is both humbled and

grateful for George Haddad’s life’s work. There has never been a dull moment between us. This gratitude will be celebrated on 30 September in St Michael’s Church on the Schneller site. Once again, the organ will resound – to the praise of God and to the joy of the Haddad family and their guests. That is, as long as the political and military situation doesn’t throw a spanner in the works.

George Haddad is handing over a well-managed house to his successor, Ms. Odette Haddad Makhoul, who also looks back on a long history with the Schneller School. There will be many changes. Every new director brings in their own unique style. However, the challenges remain enormous. May God’s blessing be stronger than the challenges – and may the Haddads enjoy a long and happy retirement together.

Uwe Gräbe

'It's an honour to help people in need'

University visit with a Schneller alumnus

It's six o'clock in the morning. I'm off to meet Yousef Al-Rabaiyah. We haven't seen each other since the end of my voluntary service in 2019. Back then, Yousef was about to take exams for his final school certificate. Now I'm waiting for him in the courtyard of the boarding home at the Theodor Schneller School (TSS). I want to go with him to Hashemite University where he is in his second year of studying to become a nurse.

Yousef (born in 2004) grew up not far from the school. He started at the TSS in the first grade. I taught him German in the ninth and tenth grades when I was an ecumenical volunteer in Jordan. Yousef was a remarkably motivated and bright student who was popular not only with the staff but also with the other boys and girls in his class.

Today, Yousef is running a little late. When he eventually turns up, he has two coffee cups with him, one for himself and one for me. He insisted on picking me up at the school so that I wouldn't have to travel alone on the bus. He looks at the newly planted lettuces and greets Samer Al-Batarseh, head of the boarding home. After a brief chat, we set off to the Hashemite University of Jordan, a trip that takes quite a while.

The university is one of the more recent public universities in Jordan and is located just outside the city of Zarqa in the middle of the desert. Founded in 1995, it is one of the largest universities in the country with over 30,000 students and has a good

reputation. The TSS is very proud of the fact that a former student is now studying there.

The university is actually located not far from Yousef's home. It takes twenty minutes by car, but by public transport, the trip is a bit of an odyssey. At 7 am, we get on the bus in front of the TSS bound for Zarqa. At this time of day, the whole of Jordan is out on the roads. There are traffic jams everywhere. We have to change buses several times. Two and a half hours and three buses later, we finally arrive and Yousef is happy to show me around his university where he is in his second year of studying to become a nurse. The entire course is in English.

Today is enrolment day, which means that all the students come to choose their courses and sort out any problems with their schedules. To cover his tuition fees, Yousef has to work part-time in a household goods store. He has to plan exactly how often he can come to university and at what times. He will probably need about three more years to complete his bachelor's degree. "When you work part-time, everything takes longer," he says. After all, you don't need a Master's degree to be a nurse in Jordan.

While we are waiting outside the offices, we have plenty of time to talk. Yousef tells me he still has a lot of contact with boys and girls from his time at the TSS. Some are studying pharmacy, translation or engineering at other universities. Many have completed an apprenticeship and are already working.



The TSS is very proud of the fact that Yousef Al-Rabaiyah is studying nursing at the university.

In Jordan, a nurse is a highly respected profession. “It’s an honour for me to help people in their time of need and care for them when they are ill,” says Yousef. “I’m responsible for ensuring that their dignity is respected, even if they can no longer recover.”

We meet Yousef’s friend from university, Abdallah. The two of them show me around the university’s huge campus. What impresses me most is that the walkways are covered with solar panels. “When it gets hot in summer, you can come here to get some shade. They also spray water over the path,” say Abdallah and Yousef and they show how proud they are that the Hashemite University has received several awards for its renewable energy projects. “Our university is striving to be climate-neutral.”

On the way back to the TSS, Yousef talks about his hopes for the future. “Firstly, I hope to become a good person and achieve my dreams someday. I can well imagine working abroad, perhaps in Germany.” He can still speak a little German, even though he has used it very little since his time at the Schneller School.

Lisa Schnotz worked at the Theodor Schneller School in 2018/2019 as part of the EMS Ecumenical Youth Volunteer Programme. She now sits on the Executive Committee of the Evangelical Association for the Schneller Schools (EVS) and regularly visits Jordan privately.

Holding a university on course whatever the crisis

Dr George Sabra has been in charge of the Near East School of Theology (NEST) for twelve years; before that, he was Dean of Studies for many years. Now he is retiring. He is succeeded by Dr Martin Accad, who becomes the new President of the seminary.

In his last report to the NEST Board of Managers, Sabra compared the current situation in Lebanon to the last years of the Civil War from 1986 to 1990. That was



Georges Sabra

NEST



Fuller Seminary

Martin Accad

online basic courses in theology. During the past few years, his efforts have been part of the ongoing struggle for the institution's very survival. The constituent churches, the staff and the student body as well as the international partners owe an enormous debt of gratitude to Sabra for everything that he achieved.

In September, Dr Martin Accad takes over as President of the NEST. He has his spiritual roots in the Church of God, re-

when he began his service at the NEST. It is difficult to say which period is worse, then or now, but one thing is abundantly clear: Sabra has kept his institution on course, objectively, unruffled, always exacting the same academic standard which he stands for as a graduate of the University of Tübingen (doctorate 1986).

From the very beginning, he gave his whole-hearted support and helped shape the "Studies in the Middle East" (SiMO), an international study programme which the EMS is responsible for in Germany. He has founded several international partnerships and most recently introduced

ceived his doctorate at Oxford and until recently served at the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary and attended a Baptist church. Accad has already taught Islam and Christian-Muslim relations at the NEST for two years. He advocates a "kerygmatic approach" (see Schneller Magazine 2-2023, 12-13) – meaning for him the middle way between an indifferent equal perception of all religions, and a purely evangelistic approach. In this respect, he bases his views on a "Public Theology", as postulated in the ecumenical document "We Choose Abundant Life" (see Schneller Magazine 1/2022, 26-27). He also co-founded a working group entitled

An evangelical school becomes fit for the future

“The Archaeology of Violence” whose aims is to make different narratives about the Lebanese civil war understandable for the respective other side – a long overdue endeavour in a country where the traumas of war have been suppressed for far too long!

The tragedy, however, is that the change of leadership takes place virtually on the brink of an abyss. The SiMO programme has been suspended for the time being due to travel warnings and travel restrictions; there are now virtually no international students at the NEST. Not only that. A certain amount of disillusionment has crept into international relations – as a result of each other’s stance (even if only assumed) on violence in Israel and the war in Gaza.

Accad would like to continue building up NEST’s international networks, attract new student groups and place the NEST even more firmly on the regional and international theological map. We wish him infinite strength and God’s abundant blessing!

Uwe Gräbe

Beirut/EMS. The crises in Lebanon have had serious consequences for evangelical school work. For example, the National Evangelical Church of Beirut (NECB) had to close its school in the centre of Beirut two years ago. The project for an evangelical vocational training centre in Abay was put on ice. Apart from the Johann Ludwig Schneller School, the NECB only has the National Protestant College (NPC) left in Kfarshima on the south-eastern outskirts of Beirut. And this institution has also fallen into serious difficulties recently.

There was only one alternative to closing the NPC in Kfarshima: the entire institution had to be made so sustainable that energy costs, for example, were totally economised. That is where the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Württemberg stepped in. Although it was unable to provide a regular subsidy for the NPC, it used development funds to subsidise a photovoltaic system and a refurbishment of the building to make it energy-efficient. The new photovoltaic system is already fully operational. Now another part of the building is being refurbished. The course has thus been set for the NECB to continue providing valuable educational work and at the same time contribute to the integrity of God’s creation.

17.11.

Cordial invitation

The Evangelical Association for the Schneller Schools e.V. (EVS) invites all members and friends of Schneller work to the 2024 General Meeting on

Sunday, 17 November 2024

at the Evangelical Church of St John (Johanneskirche) in Karlsruhe-Ettlingen in Friedrichstrasse/corner of Albstrasse

10:00 Church Service

hopefully with
Rev. Dr Habib Badr from Beirut

11:30 General Meeting, Part 1

with reports from the Schneller schools

12:30 Lunch

Gemeindehaus, Friedrichstraße 43

14:00 Public keynote speech

Rev. Dr Khaled Freij, Director of the TSS: *“Child protection and the challenges of boarding home life in times of war and crisis”*, followed by a panel discussion which will also feature the new director of the Johann Ludwig Schneller School, Odette Haddad Makhoul

15:15 General Meeting, Part 2

Formalities

About 16:15: Conclusion and blessing for a safe journey home

All EVS members will receive a detailed written invitation to the General Meeting.

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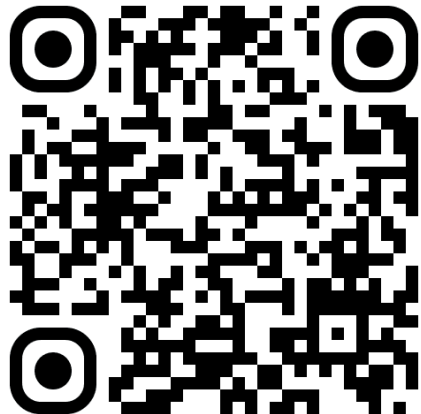
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Reader's Letters

Response to Schneller Magazine 2/2024

I would like to thank Uwe Gräbe very much for his article on page 4. He presented a different view of the situation in the Holy Land in very impressive and clear words, placing the people on both sides of the conflict at the centre, in what I consider a very balanced way.

Reading the article made me realise that the scope of this „conflict“ differs significantly from almost all previous conflicts in the Holy Land. And that this time, it will probably take a very long time before there is a rapprochement or even mutual understanding and acceptance.

Bernhard Scheurenbrand, Berlin

Obituary

The Evangelical Association for the Schneller Schools (EVS) bids farewell to **Reverend Hans-Ulrich Dapp** who passed away on 5 February 2024. As a young man, he was a trainee at the Johann Ludwig Schneller School (JLSS) in Lebanon and was then associated with Schneller work all his life.

The EVS also bids farewell to **Adelheid Köberlin** who passed away on 23 April 2024. She worked as an educator at the JLSS from 1968 to 1971. The EVS has lost a loyal friend in her.

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The Schneller Magazine is also available in German and
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<https://schneller-schulen.ems-online.org>



*But in keeping with his promise
we are looking forward to a new heaven and
a new earth, where righteousness dwells*

2. Peter 3,13



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