

# SCHNELLER

MAGAZINE ON CHRISTIAN LIFE IN THE MIDDLE EAST



EVS Evangelical Association  
for the Schneller Schools

4/2023



## Room in the inn

The Schneller school boarding homes

## ROOM IN THE INN

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Back cover: Christmas crib in the Church of St Luke at the Holy Land Institute for the Deaf in Salt, Jordan (EMS/Buck)

**Dear Reader,**

most of the articles in this Schneller magazine had already been written when terrorists from the Gaza Strip raided Israel on 7 October and carried out a massacre of the civilian population there – a massacre driven by their murderous hatred of Jews that continues a long and terrible tradition. While the war against Hamas still rages in Gaza and more and more Palestinian civilians are becoming victims, we have added two more articles to this issue.



However, the main feature has not changed. “There was room in the inn.” Unlike in the Christmas narrative, which tells of Mary and Joseph having to flee to what was presumably a provisional shelter to give birth to their child in the same way as the many traumatised internally displaced persons in Gaza are now having to do to flee their bombed-out homes, there is still room at the Schneller school boarding homes: room for boys and girls from poor and broken families, orphans and half-orphans, regardless of religion and family affiliation. The boarding homes are the very heart of the Schneller schools in Lebanon and Jordan. That is why the Theodor Schneller School in Jordan is planning to completely refurbish and remodel its boarding home building. So many people have been involved in the planning – including the children and educators at the boarding home themselves. The Evangelical Association for the Schneller Schools is contributing to the project with substantial funds – together with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Württemberg.

People need prospects, hope and a chance to lead a self-determined life. This is just as true for the children at the Schneller schools as it is for the people in Gaza. No-one knows yet what will become of this completely devastated region and its people who bear the physical and emotional scars. But one thing is clear: the situation can no longer continue as it is. It will not be possible to establish a sustainable security – and certainly not peace – by wiping out a population of millions.

So let us continue to stand by our partners in the Middle East. We hope you enjoy reading about the successes of (boarding home) education for peace and mutual respect in this issue. And let us celebrate Christmas together. Especially in times such as these. For there should not only be room in the inn, but also “peace among the people of His favour.”

Many greetings on behalf of the editorial team.

Best wishes, Uwe Gräbe, Pastor

# The Wendlingen organ resounds in Amman

Music and peace take centre stage at the 2023 EVS General Meeting

**It is not an exaggeration to say that the 2023 General Meeting of the Evangelical Association for the Schneller Schools (EVS) can be described as a unique event. On the same day, the organ was inaugurated in Amman. Three years previously, it was still standing where the EVS met: in the Johannesforum in Wendlingen.**

The agenda already hinted that the EVS had something special up its sleeve. In fact, the agenda was turned completely upside down. Instead of starting with a worship service in the morning as usual, the meeting took place shortly before midday at the Johannesforum in Wendlingen and began with the formalities of a general meeting. The worship service was rescheduled for the afternoon, in a way marking the climax and end of the meeting.

The congregation in the Christ Episcopal Evangelical Church in Amman and the Wendlingen congregation were to pray and sing together during a live broadcast – and above all, it was to inaugurate the Weigle organ, which had been shipped from Wendlingen to the Theodor Schneller School in the last few months. The Wendlingen congregation no longer needed the instrument after their church was demolished. As Sunday is a normal working day in Jordan and worship services usually take place in the late afternoon, the EVS had to readjust its agenda. More about the worship service later.

At the General Meeting, EVS Chair Kerstin Sommer reported on important de-

velopments that had taken place over the previous twelve months at the two Schneller schools in Lebanon and Jordan. For example, in spring, a new hangar was inaugurated at the Johann Ludwig Schneller School (JLSS) in Lebanon. It not only provides space for the electrical workshop, but also facilities for servicing electric cars in the future. At the TSS in Amman, a lot of effort had gone into planning the general refurbishment of all the buildings which is estimated to cost €1.3 million. Work on the boarding home buildings was to be started in the first construction phase in the spring. This alone would cost an estimated €900,000. The EVS Executive Board is providing €350,000 and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Württemberg is contributing the same amount. The difference of €200,000 will have to be financed through donations.

The treasurer of the EVS, Christian Kißling, gave a detailed and transparent explanation of the association's annual accounts. In 2022, income was just



Linked online over the internet – Wendlingen and Amman congregations celebrate a joint service.

under €900,000 – around 20% less than the long-term average. Donations, collections and bequests in particular fell by more than a fifth to €683,000. This can be explained by a once-off bequest of €250,000 received the previous year. In 2022, the EVS only received €12,000 in bequests. However, Christian Kießling ventured to take a look at the prospects for 2023. There was a clear indication of an increase in both donations and bequests, he said. For example, a bequest of €380,000 had already been received this year. The General Meeting unanimously approved the activities of the Executive Board and adopted the 2024 business plan.

Kerstin Sommer also reported on the Schneller Foundation – Education for Peace, which the EVS set up 13 years ago. Unfortunately, the Foundation was unable to make a disbursement this year because the financial markets had performed so poorly. However, she expects

that next year’s disbursement would be significantly higher. “Then we will also be able to finance larger projects,” she said. Since its establishment, the Foundation has distributed a total of €393,000.

This year, the Foundation’s Executive Board and the Board of Trustees were reappointed as scheduled. Andreas Maurer, Managing Director of the Paulinenpflege and former EVS Executive Secretary, and Markus Schoch, Prelate in Reutlingen, continue to sit on the Board. EVS Chair Kerstin Sommer is also a member by virtue of her office.

Bernd Apel, Jochen Cornelius-Bundschuh, Berthold Frieß, Volker Jung and Erwin Ritte have stepped down from the Board of Trustees. The following members were reappointed to the Board of Trustees by the EVS Executive Board: Musa Al-Munaizel, who has been associated with the Schneller Schools for forty years and who worked as a peace educator at the TSS for several years, and Jutta Herold, who was a volunteer at the TSS in 2012/2013 and has been a member of the EVS Executive Board since last year. The Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS) appointed Christine Keim to the Board of Trustees. She is a senior church councillor for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Württemberg and has been associated with the two schools for many years.



EMS/Buck (3)

Without them, the organ would never have come to Amman: church musician Klaus Schulten (left) and organ builder Gerhard Walcker-Mayer.

The General Meeting unanimously appointed to the Board of Trustees Heike Springhart, Bishop of Baden, Stephan Arras, Provost of the Protestant Church of Hesse and Nassau, and theologian and Islamic scholar Yasin Adigüzel from the



Honoured with the golden Schneller dove: Gerhard and Alexander Walcker-Mayer.



Joscha Quade received an official blessing for his services (between Kerstin Sommer and Uwe Gräbe, on the left Dieter Heidtmann, EMS General Secretary).

Protestant Youth Organisation in Württemberg. The re-elected members included CDU Member of the Bundestag Steffen Bilger, former Federal Minister of Justice Herta Däubler-Gmelin and composer Oliver Schneller, who now represents the fifth generation of the founding family of the Syrian Orphanage and Schneller's work in the Middle East.

Klaus Schulten impressively explained the great importance that music, and organ music in particular, has always had in the Schneller family in his keynote speech

“The sound of the organ in the Middle East yesterday and today. Background facts about the organs at the Syrian orphanage”. The church musician, who is familiar with many organs in the Middle East, not only campaigned for the Wendlingen organ to be shipped to Amman, but has also spent many years researching the organ tradition at the Syrian Orphanage and recently published a book on the subject. (see page 21) He called the organ move a “visionary” project. It was an extremely sustainable investment in culture and spirit. Music was always an education for peace. The organ has made it possible to foster relationships between people in Wendlingen and Amman. The organ was a symbol of understanding, coming closer together and peace. “We are grateful that it can once again be heard in another location for the praise of God,” said Schulten.

This was all made possible thanks to organ builder Gerhard Walcker-Mayer and his son Alexander, who not only disassembled the Wendlingen organ into all its individual parts for transport overseas, but they also spent weeks reassembling the

organ in Amman in the extreme summer heat. In recognition of this tremendous achievement, the EVS presented them with the “Golden Schneller Dove”.

As was to be expected, the horrific war between Hamas and Israel was also a topic of discussion at the EVS General Meeting. After all, many members of the Association are closely connected to the Middle East in many different ways. It was remarkable that discussions on this topic were marked by both their depth of content and great mutual respect.

The joint worship service between Wendlingen and Amman was also coloured by mourning for the many deaths resulting from this conflict. However, it was sad that the organ could not be heard in

the Johannesforum – presumably due to an error in the software settings – and this disappointed many in Wendlingen.

Nevertheless, the 12th of November 2023 will always be remembered as the Sunday on which two congregations in Jordan and Germany prayed together for peace in Israel and Palestine. The prayer of intercession reads as follows: “We pray for all victims of bloodshed, violence and persecution and for all who are in danger in the Holy Land and throughout the world. We pray for all who mourn loved ones who have died in the terrible events of recent months. We pray for all those who preach violence. May their hearts be transformed towards the path of peace.”

*Katja Dorothea Buck*

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**The Schneller Magazine is also available in German and can be read online:**

**<https://schneller-schulen.ems-online.org>**

# The sound of the organ in the Middle East

The keyword “Middle East” is unlikely to make anyone think of organs in the region. Therefore, the book reviewed here has many surprises in store. Klaus Schulten, himself a qualified church musician, traces the history of organs at the institutions in the southern Levant initially under the responsibility of the German Protestant Church.

It starts with the organs at the Syrian Orphanage in Jerusalem which no longer exists today. It ends with the shipment of organs no longer needed in their original churches from Scotland and Württemberg to the Schneller schools in Lebanon and Jordan. The last story alone would be long enough to fill an entire adventure novel. But above all, it shows the importance of church music at these institutions.

The history of the instruments at the Church of the Redeemer in Jerusalem is also described in detail. Experts in organ building and organ playing would certainly be interested in the descriptions and explanations of the stops and sound concepts of the organs. However, the book is particularly impressive as the author places all this in their historical contexts, so that one can also learn a lot about the trials and tribulations of the German Protestant institutions in the Holy Land. In order to compile the book, the author conducted extensive research in a number of different archives. A great deal of material that was previously unknown or unpublished is presented here for the first time. This well-produced book with numerous illustrations is recommended to anyone with an interest in the history and music

history of the region since the 19th century. Finally, it should be noted that the author has published three CDs with recordings from the Protestant churches in Jerusalem. They are available on his website [augustevictoria.net](http://augustevictoria.net).

*Prof Dr Martin Vahrenhorst*



Klaus Schulten  
**Orgeln im Nahen Osten**  
Das Syrische Waisenhaus  
Jerusalem und seine Orgeln  
im Spiegel der Zeit.  
Erlanger Verlag 2023  
ISBN 978-3-87214-581-9  
141 p, Hardcover  
22 Euro

**The book is only available in bookshops  
or online at [www.erlanger-verlag.de](http://www.erlanger-verlag.de)  
but not from the EVS Secretariat.**

**Donations:** The shipment of the organ from Wendlingen to Amman and its reassembly at its new location cost a high five-figure sum. Many have already donated, but unfortunately there is still a shortfall of a few thousand euros. We therefore kindly appeal once again for donations: :  
Evangelischer Verein für die Schneller-Schulen  
Evangelische Bank eG  
DE59 5206 0410 0000 4074 10  
Purpose: Orgel TSS



# Congratulations to Amman!!!

## An organ workshop at the Theodor Schneller School

**Finally, there it is, the Weigle organ from Wendlingen. It stands in the church of the Theodor Schneller School in Amman as if it had never been anywhere else. The sign on the organ console reads: Friedrich Weigle, Echterdingen, 1968. Klaus Schulten conducted an organ workshop in Amman in October 2023. He shares his impressions here.**

**T**he trip to Amman in mid-October 2023 had been planned for some time, at a time when nobody knew what would happen on 7 October and after. I made the trip anyway.

Gerhard Walcker had finished the organ in the summer and I thought you can't just say, the organ is finished, here's the key to the console, on the right are the light and motor switches, on the left are the stop keys. Whereas there are quite a number of organs in Jerusalem, even in Beirut, it's a different situation in Amman. My intention was therefore to introduce the organ to all those who play keyboards or piano in Jordan's churches.

First of all, I took a day for myself to familiarise myself with the instrument. I wanted to get to know it and discover it. I wanted to do what you always do when you play a concert, for example: see the organ as a companion, enter into a dialogue with it, find out what I want myself and what the organ wants – and then not only play the music I wanted to play but bring it to life.

It was a very intense moment when I entered the church: I went into the room and was overwhelmed by the sheer height of the organ that even reaches up to the church roof. When you stand in front of it, you really have to say: how incredibly impressive. This organ fits in perfectly well with the concrete architecture of the church and – of course I don't know the old location – it probably sounds even better than before, because the room in Amman is smaller, the organ is positioned at exactly the right place in the church and the sound has great presence.

I admit the organ is even better than I thought. It is probably one of the best Weigle organs made in the 1960s; fortunately, the few basic stops carry very well and are beautiful; and I know of churches in Württemberg that have nowhere near as good an organ.

Hermann Schneller, grandson of Johann Ludwig Schneller and founder of the Syrian Orphanage in Jerusalem, built the two schools in Lebanon and Jordan together with his brother Ernst Schneller after the war and tried in vain for years to install an organ in the church at the Theodor Schneller School.

Now, 125 years after the first organ was installed at the Syrian Orphanage, this has finally become reality. It may seem to be an irony of history but the organ comes very close to Hermann Schneller's original concepts, all of which are documented. In fact, this organ is even better. Back then,



Klaus Schulten at the Weigle organ in Amman

nobody would have had the courage to simply place an organ in the church nave.

So congratulations to Amman and to all those who had the courage to actually carry out this project. If anything is sustainable, it is this: things can be created – they can develop, and if there is a language of peace, then it is music.

The workshop took place over the following two days. What I found fascinating were the people who attended: I have rarely experienced people with so much respect, openness, interest, self-confidence and amazement, amazement at the things that exist in the here and now. On the other hand, nobody brought any notes with them. Instead, there was plenty of time to explain to the eight participants what an organ is, how to approach it and

how it works with 8' and 4' pipes, the overtones, the manuals, couplers and the special combination buttons... in short, what the whole concept of this instrument is. Above all, how to play or release the keys and how to play hymns.

There was one man there who could read music very well. He turned the pages of one of the pieces in my presentation with great confidence. The others would really need the opportunity to take proper keyboard or piano lessons first. But almost all of them play somewhere on Sundays.

All in all, it makes you marvel at the sense of gratitude of the local people, the amazement at what an organ is and can do – and compare it with the situation in our country, where people tend to no longer need organs at all... and to replace the great choral tradition of our Church with arbitrariness – whatever sounds and words are needed are enough.

Gerhard Walcker has done an outstanding job with his immense experience, skill and patience, and the organ is as good as new. He deserves our enormous gratitude and recognition. It would have been irresponsible to destroy such an organ.

*Klaus Schulten*

**Inauguration:** Church musician Klaus Schulten will present the organ at a dedication concert on 21 April 2024 in Amman. Please see the following page for an invitation.

## Trips to the Schneller schools

In spring 2024, there will be two different opportunities to travel to the Schneller schools in the Middle East, depending on the political situation in the region. Unfortunately, the fact that the two trips will be at the same time was unavoidable.

### Trip to the inauguration concert of the organ at the Theodor Schneller School

The Evangelical Association for the Schneller Schools (EVS) and the Theodor Schneller School (TSS) invite all those who are interested to an inauguration concert of the Weigle organ at Christ Church Amman on Sunday, 21 April 2024.

The German church musician Klaus Schulten, together with the director of the TSS, Rev. Dr Khaled Freij (readings), will present the instrument in a dialogue be-

tween sounds and words under the title of "Music for Peace". This will be followed by a festive reception when the TSS choir will sing under the direction of Jordanian music teacher Qamar Badwan. There will then be an opportunity over dinner to socialise with the people who support the work at the TSS, including the children.

For those travelling from Germany or Switzerland, the EVS is planning a small tourist package together with a travel agency for the time between 18 and 24 April 2024. Anyone interested should contact the EVS Secretariat at [evs@ems-online.org](mailto:evs@ems-online.org) for further information on conditions, cost and accommodation.

### Trip to Lebanon with a visit to the Johann Ludwig Schneller School

Under the guidance of EVS board member Anselm Kreh, the Limburg-based tour operator Tobit is offering an eight-day plane trip to Lebanon from 20 April to 27 April 2024.

Besides seeing the sights in Beirut, Byblos, Anjaar and Sidon, the itinerary also includes a visit to the Johann Ludwig Schneller School. The cost is €1,445 per person in a double room.

For more details: [www.tobit-reisen.de](http://www.tobit-reisen.de) or send an email to [info@tobit-reisen.de](mailto:info@tobit-reisen.de)



Gerhard Walcker

The former Wendlingen organ in its new home at the Johann Ludwig Schneller School in Amman.