



Medical Mission to Lebanon Oktober / November 2020

The Himmelsperlen Medical Mission to Lebanon this autumn, was different from all our previous trips! The team of 10 was full of hope and their expectations high, as we prepared ourselves for our first Mission after a long Corona-related break.



This time, our partners in **the True Vine Baptist Church in Zahlé** had many challenges to contend with. The clinic that we had previously used for patient treatment could not be set up in the church building due to Corona. The only alternative was a hastily rented and poorly renovated apartment that borders on the church's car park. There, we had three treatment rooms. The other half of the team worked in a container in the refugee camp. The registration and admission of patients took place outdoors. Our team included an ophthalmologist, a gynaecologist, an internist and an Accident and Emergency doctor, a general practitioner, paediatrician, dentist with assistant, a midwife and a nurse. The mission was led by Margret Meier as coordinator.

Early on Monday morning, after setting up the treatment rooms with the medical equipment we had brought from home, we were ready to start. **First, corona tests were required** for the staff of the church and the teachers of the church's school. After a long shut-down, school lessons were due to begin again that day. Next, it was the turn of the translators, the cook and the drivers of the school buses. Almost all of the people tested were negative. Only two of the teachers were positive and were immediately quarantined. That was an answer to prayer - praise and thanks be to God! As soon all the safety requirements were over, we could turn our attention to the first patients.



At nine o'clock, some patients came to the parking lot, which served as a waiting area, and the others were in the Fayda Refugee Camp. The usual distance and hygiene rules applied. Due to corona, temperature controls took place at the entrance. If anyone showed symptoms, they were separated from the other patients and then examined by a doctor. Patients with no symptoms were registered by Lebanese employees. Their name, age, place of residence and telephone numbers were stored in the computer. Their symptoms were then recorded by a nurse or midwife on the team. Depending on their complaint, they were forwarded to the appropriate specialists. The translators, all native Arabic speakers made this possible. They were invaluable to our mission and we are very thankful to them. These young people come from Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Egypt and are all highly motivated. At times the crowd of patients was so great they had to wait patiently for hours. Nobody was sent away everyone was given the opportunity to be treated by a doctor.

Every evening a team meeting was held to discuss **the patients' diagnoses**. About **25** of them **require further treatment**, including several **operations**. Any additional care is left in the hands of **the True Vine Church Medical Director** who refers the patients to appropriate hospitals or specialists. Here are a few examples.

A **19-year-old young man** urgently needed further treatment. A few weeks previously, he had a **partial removal of his thyroid due to cancer**. According to the documents he brought with him, another operation was urgently needed because not all the cancerous tissue had been removed. The family could not afford the vital second operation. Himmelsperlen e.V took over the responsibility and costs. He is now in the hospital and we accompany him by praying for complete healing.



A father came straight from the city hospital emergency room with his son. There, they had been turned away because of a Corona outbreak. The son looked exhausted and kept falling asleep. **According to the father, the boy was seventeen-years-old, though he looked younger, and suffered from diabetes 1.** The blood sugar was very high that day and he needed insulin. The tragedy was that although the father sought help, he refused to continue measuring blood sugar and administering insulin at home because he felt overwhelmed. Even the financial help we offered couldn't change his mind. All we could do was entrust him to the care of our Heavenly Father.



Borhan and his father came specially from Beirut **to introduce themselves to our ophthalmologist**. As a passenger on a moped, he had been involved in a hit and run incident. Laceration on the right side of his head had already healed but **an irreparable paralysis of the eyelid remained**. His Muslim friend Mohammad was with him. Mohammed had recently had **a clear encounter with Jesus and was converted** and now, he spontaneously volunteered to pray for his friend with Margret Meier. It was moving to see **these two young men praying to Jesus for each other arm in arm** and seeking their help and refuge in the living God. After the prayer, both were beaming with confidence and joy. **Jesus had touched their hearts.**

Some patients were seriously ill, a woman pregnant with a child who has no brain and so, no life-expectancy. A 6-month-old baby has mucoviscidosis and only a lung transplant can help. Rudi Kopp, our dentist, had to extract a lot of teeth from children because they could no longer be treated. There was suspicion of a tumour in a girl with severe kidney disease, children with stunted growth, etc. All kinds of diseases were found among over 800 patients. They were grateful for our help, attention, examinations, medicines and prayers.

After treating the last patient, in the afternoons we had the opportunity to make house calls with **evangelists from the church**. The visits were to refugees from Syrian and Kurdish families. It was always inspiring to hear their experiences. There was a woman who, in danger because of the war, left her home in Syria with her small children and fled on foot over the mountains to Lebanon. When she was at the end of her strength and didn't know what to do next, she met **Jesus as a bright figure of light** and he said to her: **"Do not be afraid, I will help you. You can do it. I am with you and will accompany you."** Such testimonies were moving, particularly when refugees talk about their flight and persecution and especially, those who, as Muslims, have turned to the Christian faith and now live as Christians.

The refugees live in tents or poorly equipped rooms, sheds and cellars. Our visits show them that we care

and are interested in their fate. They were always grateful for the encouragement of God's Word, conversations about questions of faith, and prayer. Our gifts of love in the form of used clothes, small toys for the children and hygiene articles were gladly accepted by every household but **personal encounters are much more important**. A single evangelist in the church looks after more than 200 families through regular visits.



A centre for the blind, run by the Carmel Mission is located near the church. There, blind or visually impaired people of all ages have the opportunity to learn Braille, but also mathematics, how to play musical instruments, the use of computers and other manual skills. Their self-made wickerwork is offered for sale and this gave us an idea for a new project in cooperation with Himmelsperlen e.V. We want to help them **open a bakery to bake baguettes and various types of German bread** and sell their products to local people.



Silke, Helga and Margret stayed two weeks longer than the rest.

At the weekend, we had the opportunity to explore the beautiful country of Lebanon. In summer temperatures we were able to visit Zahlé and surrounding areas in the Bekaa plain. We went to the Lebanon Mountains in the west and Anti-Lebanon in the east, where the Syrian border runs. On the way we noticed an immense number of disused mines. After the official bankruptcy of the state a year ago, there was no money for repairs or investment. Since the explosion in August this year, the Lebanese have lost confidence in the government, with the result that many, especially young Lebanese, are leaving their homes and building a new life elsewhere.

The Syrian refugees have to stay, for them it is almost impossible to return to their country because they have lost everything there. **Through our work we could strengthened their hope and tell them that God loves them**. Thank God! He also saved us all from the coronavirus. Everyone returned home healthy and full of lasting memories.