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Dear members, friends and sympathisers of
Coexistences,

A new year is always like a promise, and in order to honour the promise of 2016, three projects are scheduled for this summer as well as the commemoration of the 10th anniversary of our association. Participants, organisers and host families are busy backstage. They are all working together to ensure the success of these projects which mean so much and are mobilising us, here and there.

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A LAST GLANCE AT THE “GRAND BAL DU PETIT NOUVEL AN” ON 15 JANUARY 2016

The ninth ball organised in favour of Coexistences was a tremendous success. This annual rendezvous has become a must. The musicians had hundreds of people dancing into the small hours of the morning and we got home exhausted but happy.

But what went on before the curtain went up on this memorable evening? How is such an event organised?

The day before, while the musicians are rehearsing, some were preparing the mezzes. Four hours of culinary complicity gave way to an appreciated result: we would sell 70 dishes! Others were preparing meals for the musicians and volunteers: 8 kilos of tasty lasagne in order to be in form all evening. In their own kitchens, others were preparing cakes, boreks and other delicacies from here and elsewhere for sale.

On the big day, while the sound engineers were preparing their material, we arranged the tables, lined up the chairs, put up the fairy lights, prepared the sandwiches, stocked up the bar with barrels of beer and the fridge-freezer with drinks delivered that morning. The musicians finished the sound check and the meal for the volunteers is served. About twenty people came to help at the bar, with the clearing up, and at the reception desks. At 8 p.m., as the doors opened, it was the musicians' turn to sit down and eat. Cash tills are filled with change, all the volunteers are at their post, candles are lit on the tables and the public can enter. And, at 9 p.m., on with the music! The first dancers approach the floor. And they rock and roll, and waltz, and chat, and over and over again. Sheer bliss!

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During the evening, between two dance steps, some of us clear the tables, others empty the beer barrels and, at 3 a.m., still a little giddy, we finish clearing up to the air of an accordion, while the musicians put away their instruments. We kiss each other goodbye before leaving, to meet again on 13 January 2017.



Preparation of the mezzes the day before and the sandwiches on the spot.
Sound setting and starting up of the music!

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HER VOICE - 14 TO 23 AUGUST 2016

After the first success in summer 2015, a new Her Voice group will be coming to Switzerland as part of a second collaboration with Beit Hagefen.

16 girls from Haifa (aged 16-17) will continue the exacting and patient work started in Israel autonomisation and emancipation in a multicultural society.

What is for women the meaning of self-awareness, self-esteem and identity maturation in a multiple social, cultural and religious environment? How is it possible to build one's self confidence in order to listen to others in their difference, but also in their resemblance? How is it possible to believe in a common capacity to bring about necessary and vital changes in a region so man-handled by History? Such are the questions and challenges confronting these students, the women and citizens of tomorrow.

Accompanied by two facilitators, including the Palestinian coach Olfat Haider, the stay in Switzerland of the aptly named Her Voice will provide a unique opportunity for the participants to live, away from the conflict, the daily requisites as a group and the life in a Swiss host family.



Before their stay in Switzerland, the girls come together for ten 3-hour bimonthly meetings. On their second meeting, they defined and signed their "constitution": respect, cooperation, honesty, dance and music!

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BREAKING THE ICE - 22 AUGUST TO 5 SEPTEMBER 2016

In 2016 and for the 7th consecutive year, a group of Jewish and Arab students from the University of Haifa will come to hike and dialogue in our Alps. The mediators will be, as for the last two years, Olfat Haider and Asaf Ron, from Beit Hagefen. The group has already been formed and has started its work in Israel. The travel dates have been scheduled with the arrival in Geneva on Thursday 25 August, and the return flight on Thursday 8 September.

Once again, we are very grateful to the Kohler family for lending their chalet in Le Fouly, and for the road transport ensured free of charge by the Civil Protection of the Canton of Vaud. The farewell evening is scheduled for Wednesday 7 September, in a site as yet to be defined.

An innovation aimed at creating new contacts between young people from here and there: for the two nights that the group will spend in Lausanne, just before returning to Israel (i.e. from 6 to 8 September), we are looking to lodge the participants by pairs with students from Lausanne who have enough room, to live together in colocation. Friends of Coexistences, if you have any children who are in this situation and who would be interested, please get in touch with François Feihl (ffeihl@coexistences.ch).

SPOTLIGHT ON THE TALI-JCJCR- PROJECT 7 TO 13 JULY 2016

In July 2016, Coexistences will receive a group of 13 to 17 headmasters and headmistresses from Jewish and Arab primary schools in Israel who collaborate in the “Dialogue and Identity” programme. In 2011 and 2013, two groups of teachers who steer this programme followed a one-week seminar in Switzerland. During their stay, these teachers were able to broaden their mutual knowledge by an experience of living together, meeting and exchanging with people active in the domains of education and interreligious dialogue in Switzerland and presenting their work during conferences open to the public. Following a discussion with those in charge of “Dialogue and Identity”, it became apparent that it is the headmasters and headmistresses who have the power to expand and perpetuate this programme in their respective schools and that they feel a genuine need to explore this project. That is why they want to take on this new experience.

DIALOGUE AND IDENTITY

“Dialogue and Identity” is organised in association with Keren Tali, an organisation which works in Jewish secular schools in Israel in order to develop teaching of an open Judaism (<http://www.schechter.edu/Page.aspx?ID=109925997>), and the Jerusalem Center for Jewish-Christian Relationships which is mainly involved in the mutual understanding between Christians and Jews in Israel, but also intended for all the religious minorities in the country (<http://www.jcjr.org/>). The programme aims at an education which aspires to a tolerant identity cultural thanks to the competences of self-reflection and dialogue acquired by meeting the other. It takes the postulate that cultural and religious values, although sources of conflict, also hold the key to an education involving a more open identity and that this concept should be applied, starting with primary schools.

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More specifically, it is a programme for twinning classes, allowing pupils from Jewish and Arab primary schools to meet each other, to introduce themselves and get to know the culture and religion of others in their daily lives in their respective families and communities. The main idea of these meetings is to work simultaneously on the identity of these pupils aged from 10 to 12, and on their openness to others there where the depth and complexity of the one reflects and enriches that of the other.

CLASS TWINNING

The classes come from ten Arab Catholic and Greek Orthodox classes in which 50% of the pupils are Muslim and from ten Jewish secular public schools where the teaching of Judaism is preponderant. In September 2012 this programme, established since 2006 in the Galilee, has spread to the centre of the country. At present, pupils from the towns of Ramle, Lod and Petach Tikva participate in it. These new twinings make it possible to reach a large Arab and urban population. The teachers from these 20 schools are formed to facilitate a series of five interreligious meetings designed for their pupils (each school receives the partner class twice and a final meeting is organised at the end of the school year for all the schools who participate in the programme).

The programme directly involves 500 to 550 pupils and 45 teachers. The 20 head teachers meet several times over the year to discuss the impact of this programme in their respective schools and exchange ideas in order to develop and understand these meetings in depth. This year especially, they met at the beginning of the school year to reaffirm their commitment to the dialogue in spite of the tensions on the streets, and their intention see this delicate operation through, both with the parents and the pupils.

Each meeting includes preparatory courses (unicultural, in the respective classes), the bicultural session and a follow-up in class (unicultural). Hebrew-Arabic bilingual didactic material, including the teacher's manual and the pupil's exercise book, has been created. Contacts with the headmasters and headmistresses and the supervision of the teachers are ensured by two Jewish coaches from Keren Tali, as well as an Arab-Christian coach from JCJCR. The parents are involved in the programme because they help their children to prepare their presentations, sometimes come to the meetings and even animate certain sequences.

DIRECT AND ONGOING COLLABORATION

"Dialogue and Identity" is a unique educational cadre because it instructs the teachers on how to animate the programme. It does not rely on outside facilitators, based on the principle that the teachers present their pupils with a good model of cooperation, a more authentic example of direct collaboration between Arabs and Jews, since they plan and lead the meetings together. Likewise, the headmasters and headmistresses who have to collaborate to set up the programme in their schools, present this model to the teachers. Because it connects two school networks rather than individual initiatives, the programme benefits from a stability ensuring its continued existence.

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The members of Coexistences who got to know the two groups of teachers in 2011 and 2013 remember the public conference given by the coach, Hossan Elias on the situation of Christian Arabs in Israel, the presentation on the significations of Shabbat and Sundays by the Dafi Deshé and Amal Dow teachers, as well as the magnificent Shabbat welcome organised by the whole group in favour of the host families. This year, Vivian Rabia from Ramle is joining the old team of coaches comprising Eva Halahmi, Ruth Drori Binder and Hossam Elias.

ORGANISATION OF THE VOYAGE IN SWITZERLAND

The Association's work group has already started organising this voyage. Concerning the accommodation, for example concerning the adults, several headmasters and headmistresses would like to dispose of their own room during their stay in Lausanne, from Sunday 10 to Wednesday 13 July.

N.B. to the families interested in receiving one or more participants: if you dispose of one or two rooms during this period, kindly contact Catherine Starkier or Halina Sandri (halina.sandri@coexistences.ch).

Thus, everybody, here and there, are working flat out to make this trip a rich and precious moment.



Ruth Drori Binder, one of the Jewish instructors and Vivian Rabia, the Arab instructor.
Ruth and Vivian at the first teacher training session of this programme, right at the beginning of the year (when there was quite a lot of tension on the streets).



COEXISTENCES IS TEN YEARS OLD! - FROM 23 TO 29 OCTOBER 2016

About forty people, members and friends, have shown their interest for the trip to Israel-Palestine that we have planned for the 10th anniversary of our association. From 24 to 27 October, four groups of about ten travellers will be received in four different places: Galilee, Jerusalem, Haifa and the territories. The voyage will terminate from 28 to 29 October with a big gathering in the desert where we hope to find a lot of those we met and received over the years.

A delegation of Coexistences went to Jerusalem from 5 to 8 May to put the finishing touches to the organisation of this trip with our correspondents there. We will thus give you more information in the next newsletter.

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25/ IN HOMAGE TO JAN DE HAAS



Jan de Haas, a member of the Committee since 2009, died suddenly on Thursday 28 January. Jan was a pillar of our Committee, even if he was seldom present at the reception of the groups or at our dinners. Driven by a principle of equality and equity, with a deep love of life and fellow humans, able to recognise, behind the different faces, individual qualities and the common human condition, independent, creative, pragmatic, with a great knowledge and practice of the authorities and institutions, and endowed with a heartfelt intelligence, he was a model and a force we could always count upon.

Of Dutch origin, born into a large family, Jan was also, so it seems, the most mischievous one. Certain anecdotes from his childhood give a presentiment of his intelligence and a rebellious irreverence. Jan came to Switzerland to pursue his theological studies and stayed after having met his wife Geneviève.

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A man of his times, marked by the events of 1968, in his youth he lived in a community and throughout his life he combined the principles of frugality, accessibility, openness and a certain defiance in the face of self-righteousness.

Appointed pastor in West Lausanne in 1978, then street pastor in 1990, Jan was a pioneer of help to drug addicts during the rise of Aids in the 80s and 90s. With the Reverend Mother Sofia, he helped drug addicts unwaveringly, in particular by distributing, clandestinely, clean syringes for the most part offered by chemist's, at a time when that was still illegal.

These were trying years, years of mainly night work, and marked by the too many burials of people who were still young. In his practical way which entirely expressed his feeling that this was a great waste, he counted 220 for an average age of 33.

He became pastor in Moudon in 2004 and until his retirement in 2015 and he also contributed to the creation of a grocery shop of the heart for the underprivileged and launched with Geneviève an interreligious dialogue group.

In March 2014, on the occasion of the visit of "Women in Movement", an interreligious group from the Galilee, Geneviève, Jan and the dialogue group received us for a day of meetings. Guiding us on a visit of the St-Etienne church, Jan very factually described the architectural features: he clearly stated that for him a church is but a pile of bricks if it is not a space for life. For the pastor he was, service to people took precedence over the ecclesial institution.

A man of values and convictions, for 10 years Jan was president of the ACAT-Switzerland, Christian Action for the abolition of torture. He campaigned, among others, in favour of the Kurds, the Armenians and against apartheid in South Africa. And in our association to which he was extremely attached.

As he came from a family who directed a shipyard, he had inherited an entrepreneurial spirit and his pragmatism. Thanks to the years he spent as a street pastor, he knew where to find resources for the projects and causes close to his heart. He was himself a precious resource in our fundraising and never failed to surprise us with ideas of symbolic gifts for our street collections. Thus, we owe to Jan the idea of selling "meters of the Mont Blanc" in order to finance, in the summer of 2010, the ascension of the Mont Blanc by young Israeli and Palestinian students from the University of Haifa.

Jan is greatly missed and leaves a void in the Committee.

Fiuna Seylan-Ongen

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SUPPORT EVENING AND DINNER

Like every year, come and bring your friends to join us on Sunday 19 June 2016 at the Refuge des 4 Vents in Pully!

You will receive more information soon, but in the meantime please reserve this gourmet evening in favour of Coexistences and tell your friends. As usual, we are rustling up an exceptional evening for you.

We look forward to all the opportunities to come together in 2016 and wish you all, members, friends and sympathisers, a luminous spring.

With our very warm wishes,

The communication and work groups of Coexistences