

Prayer Letter 73



This prayer letter is provided by ACO France, one of the six members of the ACO Fellowship. ACO France aims to be a channel for witness, fellowship and solidarity between the French Protestant churches and the other international partners of the ACO Fellowship in Syria, Lebanon, Iran, Iraq, Switzerland and the Netherlands. It also maintains links with churches and organisations in Egypt, Armenia, Palestine and Israel.

Introduction

I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Philippians 1:3-6

ACO France held its General Assembly on 14 May, hosted by the parish of Hohwald and the congregations of Barr area (*Union of the Protestants Churches in Alsace and Lorraine*).

This meeting provided an opportunity to express our gratitude for the commitment of several individuals: Albert Huber, who passed away on 29 March and served as president of the ACO for many years; Elisabeth Mutschler, who was also our president and who must step down from the committee for health reasons; and Guy Silberzahn, whose term as treasurer has come to an end.

We give thanks to God for their work, their enthusiasm and their constant support, here in France and over there in the East amongst so many friends, brothers and sisters.

We also thank Martine Kapp for agreeing to become our new president. The ACO committee is being renewed, and we are delighted to continue the work of those who have gone before us for over a century!

The worship service and discussions we experienced during this General Assembly were, of course, an opportunity to reflect seriously on the conflicts and crises tearing the Middle East apart.

We note with sadness and outrage the deadly and devastating impasse into which the powerful of this world are plunging civilian populations in the name of a logic of domination. 'Peace through force' is an illusion.

More than three months after the start of the conflict, and despite attempts at a ceasefire, the suffering continues in Iran, Lebanon, Palestine, Israel and throughout the region.

In the midst of these trials, the Churches in the East persevere in their witness to the Gospel of justice and peace proclaimed by Christ; they also work through relief efforts for the most vulnerable and through acts of reconciliation worthy of the Kingdom of God.

We give thanks to God for their commitment, and we stand with them in solidarity and prayer.

Mathieu Busch,

pastor and director of ACO France, general secretary of the ACO Fellowship

Prière

Your perpetual ruins will be rebuilt; you will reestablish the ancient foundations. You will be called, 'The one who repairs broken walls, the one who makes the streets inhabitable again.

Isaiah 58,12

Lord God our Father, Creator of all life and Saviour of our world,

We bring before you in prayer our concerns, our anxieties, our sorrows and our anger in the face of the violence raging in the Middle East. We entrust to you the bereaved families, the displaced people, and the populations plunged into uncertainty.

We pray for the Iranian people, who are suffering the terrible consequences of war, who endure daily the disastrous economic and social situation, and who are suffocating under the lack of freedom and the oppression of their leaders. We entrust to you your Church in Iran, which perseveres despite its small numbers and immense difficulties.

We pray for Lebanon, which is under fire from war, bombardments and forced displacement, and the destruction of dozens of villages in the south of the country. We think of all the families torn from their homes, more than a million people with no prospects and in need of humanitarian aid. We pray that Lebanon may resist the forces seeking to tear it apart, and that the various communities may work towards reconciliation and the unity of the country. We entrust to you the Churches and Christian organisations committed to helping the displaced and those impoverished by years of crisis.

We pray for the people of Gaza, who are surviving in nightmarish conditions in a small part of the territory. The humanitarian needs are immense in this environment, which has become unliveable and uninhabitable, where death continues to reign. We pray that a political solution may be found, leading to the restoration of the country and a new hope for the future. We entrust to you the work of those who care for the suffering, particularly the medical staff at the Al-Ahli Anglican Hospital in Gaza.

We also pray for the Palestinians in the West Bank who, day after day, endure violent attacks and injustices that deprive them of their freedom and seek to dispossess them of their land. We pray for the peacemakers, both Palestinian and Israeli, who work for justice and the pursuit of a shared future for both peoples. We entrust to you the Churches of the 'Holy Land', which are facing great difficulties in this context of war, oppression and economic crisis, but which are fighting for equal rights for all and upholding a vision of coexistence and reconciliation.

Finally, we pray for the Israeli people, caught up in a cycle of endless war, worn down by the threats of conflict and a tense political climate. We pray for those who envision a future built on cooperation and mutual recognition rather than the illusion of armed domination.

Lord God, in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace, we pray for all the peoples of the Middle East and for the Churches in that region.

Bless those who are working to restore life, to make the land habitable again, and to build a new future.

Amen.