



In September 1914, Elisabeth Heuer, a kindergarten teacher born in Hamburg in 1890, married Pastor Wilhelm Jannasch.

Still during the war son Jens Peter (1915) and daughter Christine (1917) were born. In 1920 they had a third child named Edzard.



# WILHELM AND ELISABETH JANNASCH

Wilhelm Jannasch was born in Silesia in 1888 and grew up in the religious environment of a Moravian Church. He studied theology and came here to the Aegidienkirche as a pastor in 1914. In Lübeck, as everywhere else in the German Reich, there was a strong national euphoria at the time.



The pastor's family Jannasch in the early 1920s. In addition to her family duties, Elisabeth Jannasch was committed to helping those in need in the parish.

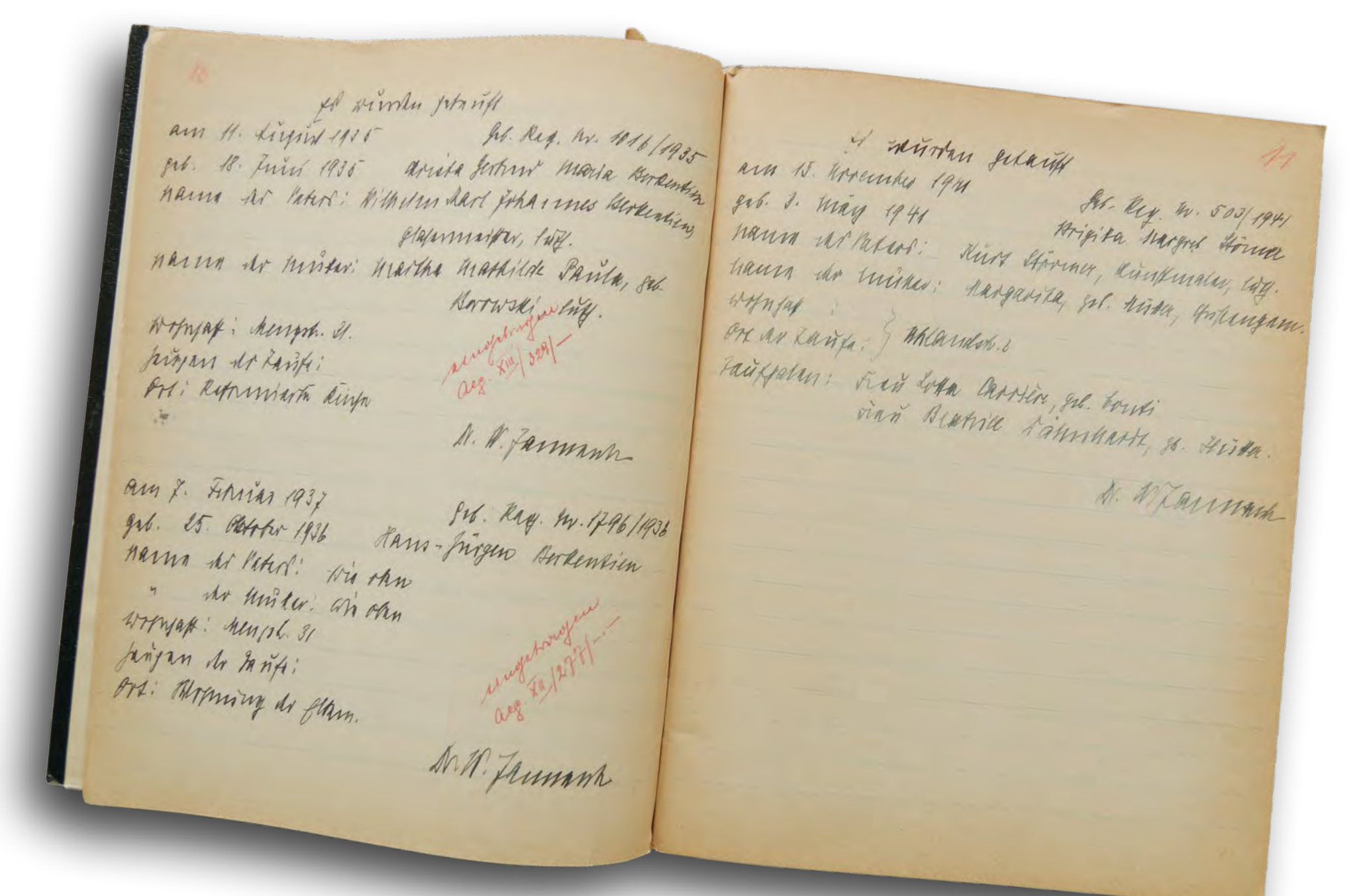


Pastor Jannasch on his way to a house baptism in the Berkentien House in Lübeck.

Wilhelm Jannasch continued to perform baptisms and marriages after his removal from office - either in the rooms of the Reformed Church or in private homes - and entered them in an "emergency book". Even later, he travelled to Lübeck to baptise children from befriended families, such as the daughter of the painter Curt Stoermer, who was considered "degenerate".

## FORCED RETIREMENT

In 1933, the German Christians, who were close to National Socialism, took over the leadership of the Lübeck regional church. Pastor Jannasch, however, supported the electoral list "Evangelium und Kirche" (Gospel and Church) in the church elections in the summer. As a result, he was suspended from office for several weeks. Soon after, he joined the oppositional Emergency Covenant of Pastors, which later gave rise to the Confessing Church. This led to an investigation under criminal law and, in April 1934, to his forced retirement. Jannasch continued to see himself as the legitimate pastor of his congregation and carried out some of his official acts.



## NO FUTURE IN LUEBECK

An invitation to a church service in March 1935, which had been duplicated on sheets of paper, led to his arrest. Jannasch had to serve a week in prison at the Burgtor. He was threatened with further imprisonment if he continued his work as a pastor. As a result, Wilhelm and Elisabeth Jannasch had to leave Luebeck with their three children.

## A CHRISTIAN HUMANIST

In 1922, Wilhelm Jannasch, only 34 years old, was appointed head pastor of St Aegidien's. Unlike his fellow pastors, who mourned the Wilhelmine Empire, he accepted the Republic as the new form of government. Although his sermons reveal a nationalistic attitude, he consistently opposed nationalist ideas in the church. In 1931 he publicly pointed out the incompatibility of Christianity and anti-Semitism.

Responsible for these boards  
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Almuth Jürgensen | A. Schaeffer  
The Righteous Among the Nations, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem



[www.jannasch-gedenken.de/en-boards](http://www.jannasch-gedenken.de/en-boards)

[www.jannasch-gedenken.de](http://www.jannasch-gedenken.de)





Having no future in Luebeck, Jannasch moved to Berlin. There he worked in the office of the Confessing Church for the self-appointed 2nd Provisional Church Leadership in Dahlem, and from 1937 he was the executive director of the Emergency Covenant of Pastors. He repeatedly called on the church to protest more strongly against the policies of the Nazi state.



In May 1936, Jannasch took the “Memorandum of the 2nd Provisional Church Leadership” to the Reich Chancellery.

In it, beyond the ecclesiastical sphere, clear criticism of the societal development in the National Socialist state is also expressed.

An den Führer und Reichskanzler  
B e r l i n W.8.  
 Wilhelmstr.78

Wir übergeben dieses Schreiben im Gehorsam gegen den Auftrag Gottes, vor jedermann - auch vor den Herren und Geblietern der Völker - ungeschweht Sein Wort zu sagen und Sein Gebot zu bezeugen. Wir vertrauen darauf, dass Gott uns die Weisheit schenkt, unseren Auftrag so klar und eindeutig auszuführen, dass dabei unsere Sorge um das christliche Gewissen und unsere Liebe zum deutschen Volk in gleicher Weise unmissverständlich erkennbar werden.

Von den evangelischen Angehörigen der NS Organisationen wird gefordert, sich uneingeschränkt auf die nationalsozialistische Weltanschauung zu verpflichten (Anlage 19). Diese Weltanschauung wird vielfach als ein positiver Ersatz des zu überwindenden Christentums dargestellt und ausgegeben. Wenn hier Blut, Volkstum, Rasse und Ehre den Rang von Ewigkeitswerten erhalten, wird der evangelische

Christ durch das erste Gebot gezwungen, diese Gewertung abzulehnen. Wenn der arische Mensch verherrlicht wird, so bezeugt Gottes Wort die Sündhaftigkeit aller Menschen; wenn dem Christen im Rahmen der nationalsozialistischen Weltanschauung ein Antisemitismus aufge- drängt wird, der zum Judenhass verpflichtet, so steht für ihn da- gegen das christliche Gebot der Nächstenliebe.

## SOLIDARITY WITH CHRISTIANS OF JEWISH ORIGIN

Even later, Jannasch continued to speak out against the anti-semitic and racist policies of the National Socialists, most recently opposing the planned forced divorces of so-called “mixed marriages”. In 1939 he became pastor of the Emergency Congregation of the Confessing Church in Berlin-Friedenau. After years of disputes, this congregation had split off from the Nazi-

# THE TIME IN BERLIN



The Krakauer couple had been living in illegality since January 1943 and found shelter in 66 different places by the end of the Nazi era.

On the night at Jannasch’s:

“At that time, as Dr Jannasch told us, several thousand Jews in Berlin were being hidden, cared for, and looked after by the Confessing Church. He saw our desperation and, although he himself was under surveillance – he too had been sentenced to imprisonment, which he had not yet served – he offered us shelter in his own home. With a heavy heart, we agreed. [...]. Mrs Dr Jannasch’s welcome and hospitality were kind and pleasant, and for the first time, we were able to sleep a little more peacefully.”

(translated from: Max Krakauer, Licht im Dunkel)

dominated main congregation and was housed in the premises of the neighbouring Goßner Mission on Handjerystraße. This was one of the few places where christened Jews were still welcome and could participate in the life of the congregation.

The Friedenau congregation also welcomed converted Jews to Holy Communion. As late as 1942, Wilhelm Jannasch baptised a Jewish woman, with Elisabeth acting as godmother.



The Emergency Congregation became a meeting place for the clerical and political opposition, where a wide range of information was exchanged. It also organised help and shelter for Jews who had to go into hiding to avoid persecution.

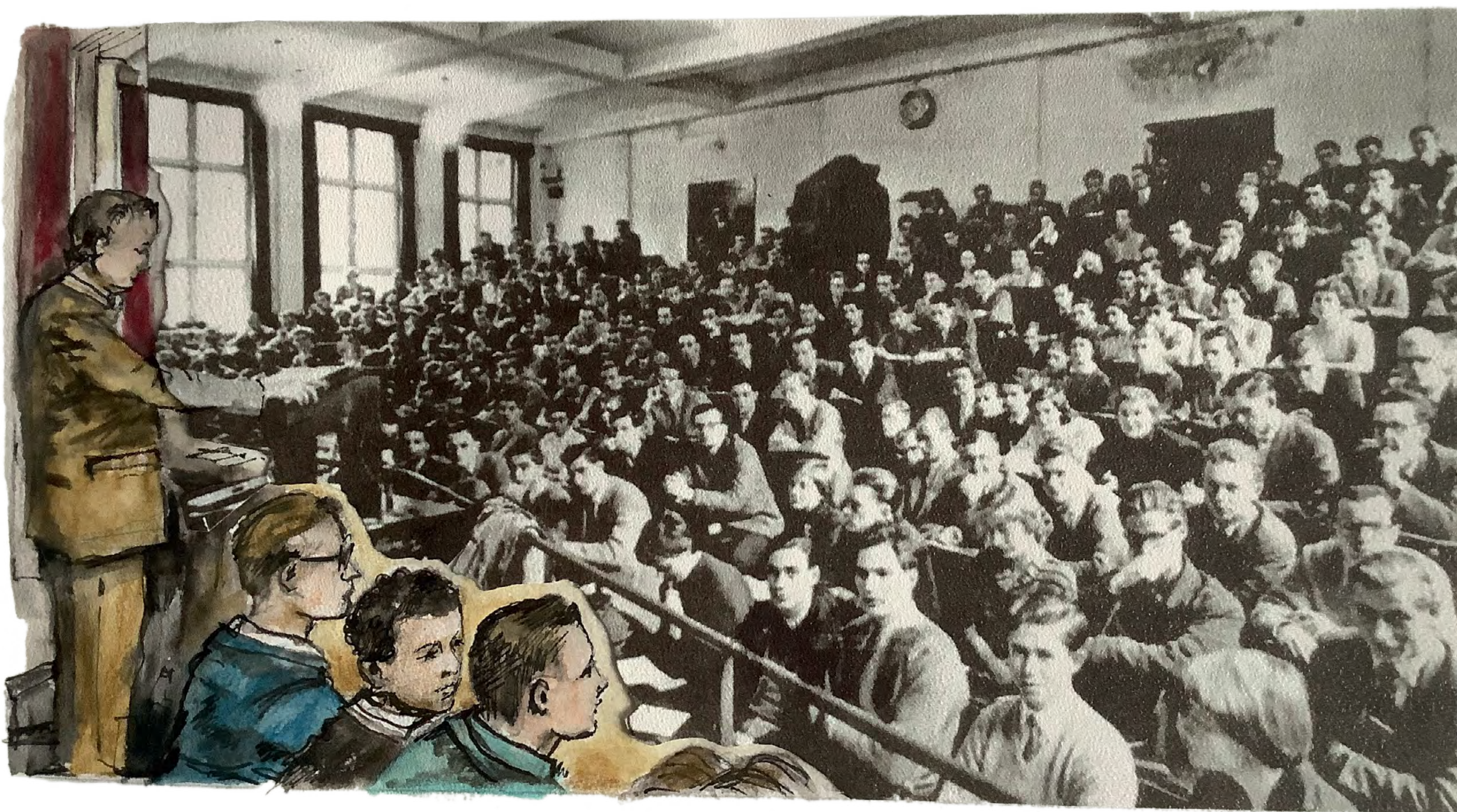
## HELP FOR THE PERSECUTED

Through his work with the Emergency Covenant of Pastors and the Confessing Church, Wilhelm Jannasch had many contacts beyond the Friedenau congregation with clergy and laity who were committed to rescuing racially persecuted people. As part of this, he and his wife Elisabeth provided night shelter for those in hiding.



In 1941 and 1944 the Jannasch couple had to learn that their sons Edzard and Jens Peter had lost their lives in the war.





Jannasch was a full professor of practical theology at the University of Mainz until he retired in October 1956. In 1962 he was awarded the Grand Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany for his stance during the Nazi era and for his work in establishing the Faculty of Theology.

After the end of the Nazi regime, Wilhelm Jannasch briefly became a member of the church leadership in Berlin-Brandenburg in 1945, before receiving a call to the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz in 1946, which had been arranged by the theologian Martin Niemöller. He had worked intensively with him in Berlin-Dahlem. Niemöller had been imprisoned for years for resistance against National Socialism.

## THE COUPLE IS HONoured

### HONOUR IN ISRAEL

In 2020, at the suggestion of the congregation of St Aegidien's, the Jannasch's were awarded the highest honours of the State of Israel: The Yad Vashem memorial in Jerusalem has accepted the couple as "Righteous Among the Nations". This honour is given to non-Jews who have taken part in a confirmed, concrete rescue operation for Jews, at personal risk and without asking for anything in return.



Until 2022, more than 22,000 people have been honoured as Righteous, including 651 Germans. In 2020, the names of Elisabeth and Wilhelm Jannasch were added.



The Jannasch family with their daughter Christine on holiday in the 1950s. Wilhelm Jannasch died in 1966, his wife Elisabeth in 1970.

### YAD VASHEM

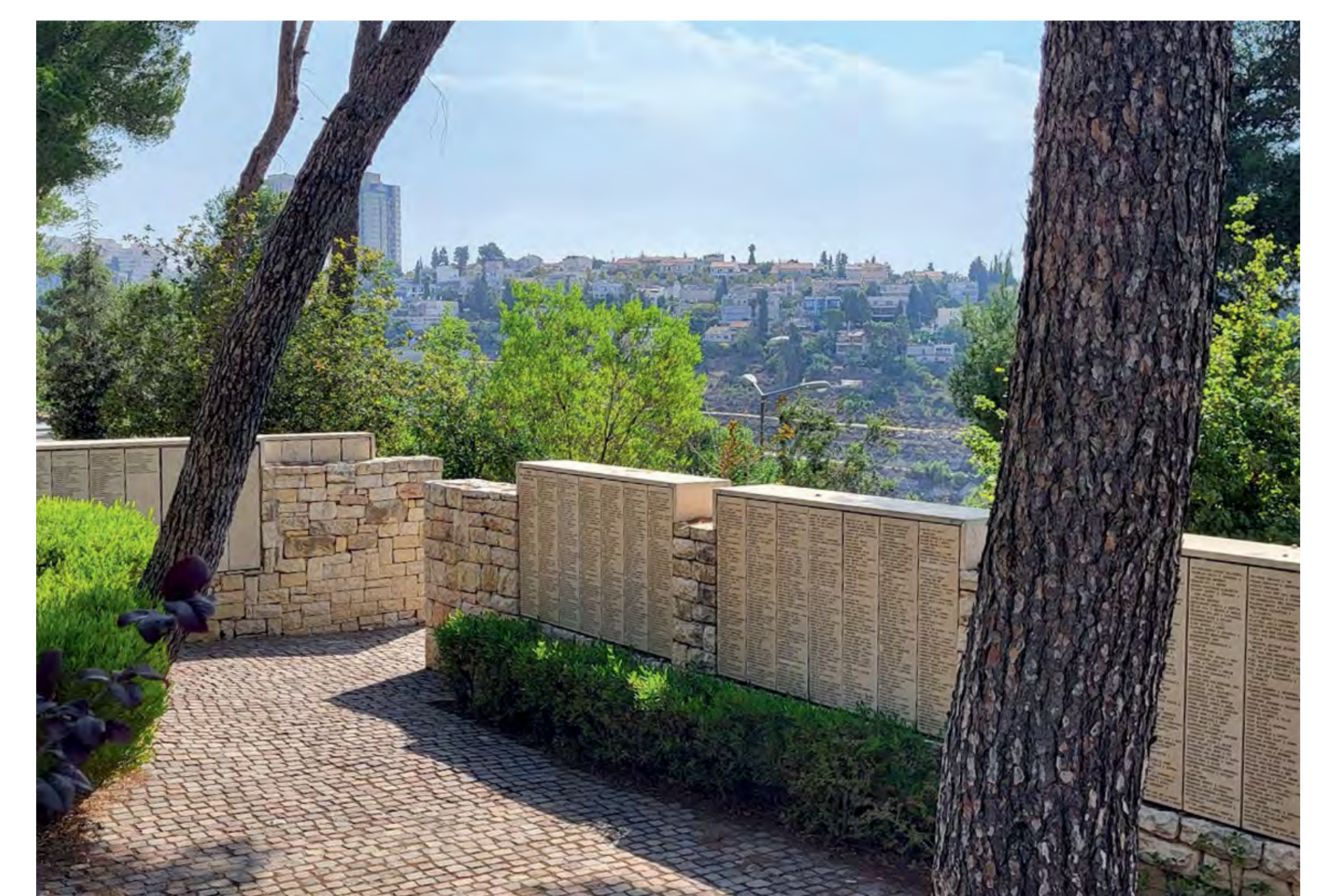
Yad Vashem is the main memorial site commemorating and documenting the extermination of the Jews by the Nazis. The initial focus was on research, collecting archival material and testimonies, and documenting the names of the victims of the Holocaust. Survivors soon demanded a memorial to the courage and humanity of the rescuers. The memorial has been open to the public since 1957 and is now visited by more than two million people a year.



As then Israeli Foreign Minister Golda Meir said at the inauguration: "The Jewish people remember not only the criminals, but also every detail of the rescue attempts." The Righteous Among the Nations "saved not only Jewish lives, but also hope and faith in the human spirit."

### RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS

With the inauguration of the "Avenue of the Righteous Among the Nations" on the Hill of Remembrance at Yad Vashem in May 1962, work began to honour those who saved persecuted Jews from deportation and death by planting a tree. The avenue is intended to commemorate those who, through their actions, defended and upheld human values in the darkest of times.



By 1989, 2000 trees had been planted on the Hill of Remembrance. Then, due to lack of space, it was decided to engrave the names of more Righteous people on the wall.