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Building Hope in the Holy Land

Fall 2021

## USAID grant will transform education for students with disabilities at Princess Basma Center

*A \$550,000 federal grant will add an elevator and renovate a rooftop playground, giving all children access to science classrooms, the school library and the new play area*



**In addition to being made fully accessible, the rooftop playground on the Mount of Olives will be updated and renovated to allow all children the opportunity to play with their peers.**

AFEDJ has been awarded a grant from USAID's American Schools and Hospitals Abroad (ASHA) to fund an exciting project at Jerusalem Princess Basma Center (JPBC). The project includes installation of a 15-passenger elevator that will connect all three floors of the Center's Inclusive School and renovation of the rooftop playground to make it safe, modern, and accessible to children with disabilities.

Currently children and young people with disabilities, who represent 30% of JPBC's 428 K-12 Inclusive School students, do not have access to the upper level playground, science classrooms or the school library. With the completion of this project, students at the school and children served by the Rehabilitation Center will be fully included in all academic, extracurricular, and recreational activities. It will align the Center's physical space with its philosophy of inclusion that guides the educational practice of teachers in classrooms every day.

AFEDJ Executive Director John Lent explained, "ASHA awards diplomacy grants to U.S. organizations like AFEDJ that have established partnerships with overseas institutions.

In our proposal we had to demonstrate how our partnership with JPBC builds mutual understanding between Americans and the people of Palestine and Israel and promotes U.S. ideas and practices in health and education. ASHA applauded JPBC's Inclusive School as a powerful and compelling example of accessibility, gender equality and inclusion.

"ASHA grants are limited to the direct costs of construction, renovation, and commodities, so every ASHA project requires the investment of resources by other partners. In this case, the partners are you, American donors who so faithfully support our mission in the Holy Land."

He added, "Thanks to you, AFEDJ is able to commit almost \$200,000 to the completion of this transformative project. We at AFEDJ and our Palestinian partners in Jerusalem are grateful for your extraordinary generosity and your friendship."

**"Thanks to you, AFEDJ is able to commit almost \$200,000 to the completion of this transformative project."**

**— AFEDJ Executive Director John Lent**

*Banner Photo by the Rev. Cn. Don Binder*

# Food for Families program in Lebanon expands to 200 families through the end of 2021

*With your support and a generous \$40,000 grant from the Holy Land Christians Society, families from across Lebanon are receiving desperately needed monthly food vouchers.*

In August Archdeacon Imad Zoorob, the sole Episcopal priest in Lebanon and Syria, distributed \$75 food vouchers to 27 staff members and 58 student families of St. Luke's Rehabilitation Center in Beirut through the generosity of American Friends over the spring and summer. According to Fr. Zoorob, "The staff members were thrilled and some teared up because their monthly wages will barely support their families for one week."

Though the school has been closed since the onset of the pandemic, staff have worked hard to stay connected to the children with cognitive disabilities served by the school. The devaluation of the Lebanese pound by 90 percent has reduced the buying power of their paychecks to practically nothing.

Fr. Zoorob sees evidence of the worsening situation every day and prays for a way to reach more families, particularly those in the All Saints Church community where he serves and the impoverished Armenian Christians whose neighborhoods were some of the hardest hit by the 2020 Port of Beirut explosion.

The board of the Holy Land Christians Society and their donors followed the deteriorating conditions across Lebanon

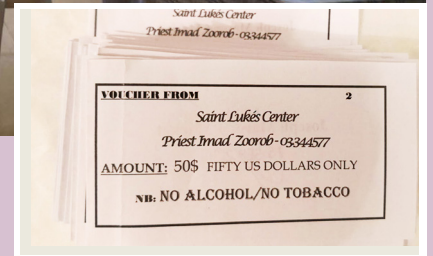


**Teachers and staff at St. Luke's Rehabilitation Center in Beirut gathered in August for the first time in many months. The food vouchers they received came as a surprise.**

and answered Fr. Zoorob's prayers by providing a \$40,000 grant to fund \$50 monthly food vouchers for 200 food insecure Lebanese families from September through December 2021.

In partnership with the Rev. Megerdich Karageozian, president of the Union of Armenian Evangelical Churches of the Near East, Fr. Zoorob has distributed the first installment of funding to support the September voucher program.

AFEDJ Trustee Jane Deland of Boston,



who serves on the Holy Land Christians Society board as well, explained the growing trust between the two organizations. "We have developed a close relationship with AFEDJ, having made several grants to both Ahli Arab Hospital and Jerusalem Princess Basma Center."

Holy Land Christians Society President Mary Kay Turner added, "Knowing of AFEDJ's ability to wire funds directly to Archdeacon Imad Zoorob assured us that our funds would reach many families in dire need of food during this deepening humanitarian crisis." *con't on page 3*

## The next generation of Holy Land Christians must not be forgotten

Your generosity inspires the Christian community in the Holy Land. Your support tells Christians working for peace and reconciliation in the Middle East that they are not forgotten.

The gift you designate in your will for the Diocese of Jerusalem and its humanitarian ministries in the Holy Land is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to ensure that vulnerable children and families will always have somewhere to turn for help.

Former AFEDJ board chair, the Rev. Charles Cloughen of Towson, Maryland,



shared his rationale for making a planned gift. "The Diocese of Jerusalem struggles daily to serve people in the Holy Land who are in dire need, and legacy gifts, such as the one I and others have made, will continue the crucial work of AFEDJ long after we have entered into eternal life."

To join Charles and other Jerusalem Saints in making a bequest, contact AFEDJ Executive Director John Lent at [jlent@afedj.org](mailto:jlent@afedj.org).



## Jerusalem Princess Basma Centre extends virtual therapy to families in Gaza

*Four years ago, Ahmad, a boy born with a rare genetic syndrome, was granted permission to travel from his home in Gaza to receive evaluation and treatment at the Jerusalem Princess Basma Centre (JPBC).*

During Ahmad's three-week stay JPBC developed an individualized therapy treatment plan and his mother received training in how to carry out the therapies he needed once they return home. Because Ahmad lives in Gaza, he has been denied the opportunity to return to the Center for re-evaluation and an updated therapeutic plan. His mother has had to rely on the 'Home Therapy Plan' she learned in 2017 as her only resource to help her son.

The JPBC Virtual Therapy Program, developed to maintain continuity of care for families during the COVID-19 pandemic, has become a lifeline for Ahmad and his family, along with five other Gazan families who previously received treatment in Jerusalem. They all now meet regularly with JPBC therapists online. His mother described the opportunity to update his treatment plan, "This program has brought hope back to our family."

During the bombardment of Gaza in May Ahmad and his family moved to the safety of a bomb shelter in a UNRWA school for five days during the attacks. His mother tells us they were able to return to their home, which was damaged, but not destroyed.

Access to rehabilitation services in Gaza is challenging due to the constant shortage of medicine, staff and supplies and the



**Bridging the gap between Jerusalem and Gaza: A therapist from JPBC's Rehabilitation Center conducts a virtual session with Ahmad and his mother**

**"This program has brought hope back to our family."**

**— Ahmad's mother**

restrictions that prevent patients from travel to outside institutions like JPBC.

Many children with disabilities in Gaza often fall between the cracks for treatment and education. Across Gaza and the West Bank, 38% of children with disabilities

are not enrolled in school. With your continued support, the dedicated team of therapists at JPBC is hopeful the Virtual Therapy Program will soon be available to other vulnerable and isolated children and families in Gaza.

## Lebanon... con't from page 2

Fr. Zoorob reports that "Soon enough we'll be out of gas, fuel, and clean water. Hospitals and pharmacies already have no medicine. Many bakeries have closed. Because of fuel shortages, people are walking to their offices. Many have quit their jobs because their salaries aren't

enough for one tank of gas."

He added, "We are so grateful for the support of our American friends. It's hard to find words to express it. Our prayers have been answered by your support of our situation. We know they will be again."

**Questions about AFEDJ or our work?**

**Please be in touch!**

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**Address Correction Requested**

Learn more about the schools, hospitals, and centers for children with disabilities owned and operated by the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem on our award-winning website at [www.afedj.org/find-an-institution](http://www.afedj.org/find-an-institution).



**In September the Holy Land Institute for the Deaf in Jordan welcomed its fourth culinary arts class.**

## **Parents Circle dialogue offers a chance to be a part of promoting peace and reconciliation**

**To take part, please fill out the registration form at [www.afedj.org/conversation](http://www.afedj.org/conversation). A link to the Zoom meeting will be included in your confirmation email.**

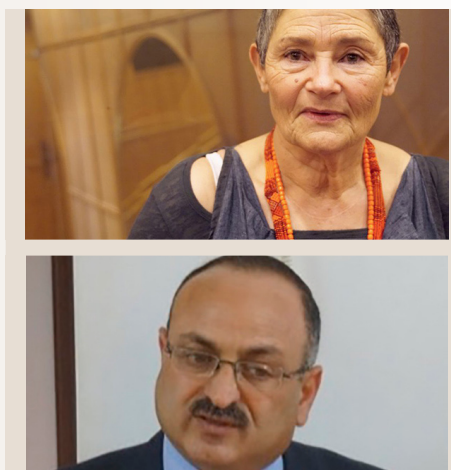
On Thursday, November 4 at 11 a.m. (ET) American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem and American Friends of Parents Circle-Families Forum will host an online conversation between two members of the Parents Circle.

Please join us to hear the personal stories of an Israeli and a Palestinian as they speak about their loved ones who were killed in the conflict. They will share their journey from pain to hope, their commitment to reconciliation and partnership, and their choice to engage in dialogue instead of revenge.

The speakers will be Robi Damelin whose son, David, was killed by a Palestinian sniper in 2002 while guarding a checkpoint near a settlement during his army reserve service and George Sa'adeh, a Palestinian and native Bethlehemite, whose 12 year-old daughter Christine died of injuries sustained in 2003 when Israeli soldiers opened fire on the Sa'adeh's car as they were driving home from the supermarket. George, his wife Najwa, and their daughter Marianne were also severely injured in the attack.

Parents Circle-Family Forum (PCFF), founded in 1995 by an

Israeli father who lost his son to violence while serving in the Israeli Defense Force, is a joint Israeli-Palestinian organization made up of more than 600 bereaved families. Their common bond is that they have lost a close family member to the conflict.



**Robi Damelin (top) and George Sa'adeh will share their stories with American Friends on November 4**