



AFEDJ

American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem

Bearing Witness

A Journey with Holy Land Christians

EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF JERUSALEM MINISTRIES

Schools

EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF JERUSALEM MINISTRIES:

SCHOOLS

“Students struggle to succeed under the pressure of occupation. Many students will not pass the official high school exam, and nearly half of young Palestinians are unemployed.”

– Giovanni Anbar, Director of the Episcopal Technological and Vocational Training Center

Jesus was often called Rabbi – teacher. With his parables, Jesus surprises and stretches our minds, engages, and enlivens our imaginations. Having minds and imaginations set free by the gospel is part of our “train[ing] for the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 13:52). The educational institutions of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem help young people in the Holy Land thrive and grow. The Christian values infused in the pedagogy and the general atmosphere of these educational institutions allow for students to grow into confident, compassionate, bridge-building Palestinian leaders of the future who will contribute to a world where all people can live together in peace.

Education is highly valued among Palestinian families, with 95.4% of children enrolled in basic education across the Palestinian Territories. The youth literacy rate of Palestinians is over 99%. These impressive numbers mask the challenges of access to schools and quality education. Adolescent Palestinian boys and children with disabilities drop out of school at alarming rates. By age 15, nearly 25% of boys and 7% of girls have dropped out of school, while 23% of boys and 30% of girls aged 6-15 years with a disability have never enrolled in school.

Children in the West Bank and Gaza face challenges that many children across the world cannot imagine. Palestinian children and young people experience constant exposure to conflict, economic hardship, and poverty. These conditions have adverse effects on children’s abilities to thrive in school and increase the need for specialized psychosocial support services, which are in short supply.



In Israel, the Arab Anglicans who run Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem schools in Nazareth and Haifa operate in a highly segregated society where Christian schools receive 1/3 the government funding of Jewish schools. In Jordan, Islam is the state religion and Christian schools – where more than 90% of the students are Muslim – must be exceedingly careful not to offend students, parents, or the authorities. In the West Bank and East Jerusalem students face fear and intimidation going to and from school in high-risk locations where they frequently must pass through military checkpoints or walk by settlements. Schools in Gaza are chronically overcrowded. Seventy percent of schools operate on double or even triple shifts systems. This reduces instructional hours and leaves no time for enrichment or counseling services.

Recurring violence and the destruction of schools disrupt services and impact the psychosocial wellbeing of Gazan children and teachers.

The Diocese of Jerusalem owns and operates twenty educational institutions enrolling about 6,500 children in Jordan, Israel, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem. Parents seek out these Christian schools because they offer a rigorous academic program and they teach and model Christian values of peace, reconciliation, and respect for all. Students graduate with the skills and the positive, hopeful outlook to become leaders in their communities. The risks are high for young people not in school in the occupied territories. Kids at loose ends are open to influencers advocating violence. Lack of education ensures unemployment. The Diocese of Jerusalem's schools are progressive and, in many ways, countercultural. They provide equal opportunities for girls and young women. They welcome and integrate children with disabilities. They provide vocational training – including girls. And their curriculum teaches the possibility of peaceful coexistence.

In *Bearing Witness*, you'll learn about two remarkable schools in the West Bank city of Ramallah – the Arab Evangelical Episcopal School (AEES), a progressive, high-performing K-12 school, and the Episcopal Technical and Vocational Training Center (ETVTC), offering vocational training programs for high school students as well as adult learners. In Session 5 you'll meet students and leaders at Christ School, the diocese's largest school and a major Christian institution in Nazareth, Israel.

Episcopal Technological and Vocational Training Center (ETVTC)

Mission: Students spend two years of hands-on learning in one of two tracks: hospitality and culinary arts or information technology. Upon graduation 97% of students move to full-time employment, additional vocational training, or university studies. Programs offered include:

- Two-year vocational programs in hospitality/culinary arts and information technology
- Technology summer camp for children 6 to 13
- Ballet summer camp for girls 6 to 16
- One-year professional culinary arts certificate for adults
- A 12-week culinary arts program offered to non-violent offenders in the Ramallah prison
- Sisterhood Academy, a six-month culinary arts/entrepreneurship course to empower women to start home business



Location: Ramallah, West Bank

Founded: ETVTC started in 2000 with one classroom and a single computer. Today it is a model of student-centered vocational training that also operates a fully functioning Guesthouse for international

travelers to the West Bank that allows students in the hospitality program to gain hands-on experience and generate revenue for the school.

Serves: About 120 high school students and 80 adults each year with 25-30 staff members

The Reality:

Even in the bustling West Bank city of Ramallah, opportunities for economic success after finishing secondary school are elusive. Parents value university preparatory education over vocational training, but few government schools offer vocational programs. Unfortunately, these values are out of sync with the actual job market and students pursuing professional degrees often end up unemployed.

Responding to the Reality:

For the young men and women who've not succeeded at traditional high school or had difficulty following their parents' expectations for success in an academic program, ETVTC offers a second chance at a productive future. Most students graduate having already secured a stable job. With a client-focused approach to learning, teachers meet young people's needs, treat young men and women equally, and help at-risk youth transcend their reality. AFEDJ supporters offer hope and opportunity for success by funding scholarships, equipment purchases, and on-the-job training.

Christ Episcopal School

Mission: Christ School provides an academic K-12 education for Palestinian students who are citizens of Israel with:

- A strong science program for junior high students
- A media and communications certificate program
- Technology and application development certificate program
- A diocesan-wide summer camp offering sports, art, music, and drama.

With 1,200 students, Christ Episcopal School is the largest school of the Diocese of Jerusalem.

Location: Nazareth, Israel

Founded: Founded in 1851 by the Church Mission Society in three rooms in the Nazareth Old Market, Christ School now sits on one of the highest hills in Nazareth. It has long served Palestinian Christian and Muslim students who are a minority in Israel.

Serves: 1,200 K-12 students

The Reality:

Public education in Israel gives little attention to peacemaking and reconciliation. Muslim parents – whose children make up 85% of the students – turn to Christ School because of the quality of education and the values emphasized. As a Christian school in Israel, Christ School receives a limited government subsidy.



Responding to the Reality:

A school of academic excellence with a relatively large Christian population, Christ School prepares students to grow into the next generation of compassionate, bridge-building Palestinian leaders. Helping young Arab Palestinians become effective communicators is a top priority so they can find their voice to tell the world about the reality of Arab Palestinians who are citizens of Israel. Contributions of AFEDJ donors are increasingly important as the school attempts to make tuition affordable for all qualified students.

Arab Evangelical Episcopal School (AEES)

Mission: The only Diocese of Jerusalem school with a majority of Christian students (54%), AEES serves the Palestinian community in all its diversity, regardless of students' religion, race, gender, and socioeconomic status. With an academic program for middle and low-income students in grades K-12, the school's mission is to develop the student as a "whole person," to be respected as a human being, having his or her own unique character. In addition:

- Secondary students choose from two tracks: science or humanities.
- The school offers an alternative program for students with special needs, learning disabilities, and social and psychological problems.

Location: Ramallah, West Bank

Founded: AAES started as a small orphanage for girls in 1954 and is now one of the most respected K-12 schools in the West Bank. In the early 1990s, it expanded to grades 10-12 to allow low-income ninth grade students the opportunity to graduate from high school.



Serves: 845 students and their families.

The Reality:

Christian and Muslim families seek out AEES for its progressive values and rigorous academic program. AEES receives no subsidies from the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Education. The school depends on student tuition for operating expenses and looks to donors from the U.S. to fund capital projects, instructional technology, and renovations. In the 1967 war, two students were killed and two lay sisters were injured when the school was struck by bombs.

Responding to the Reality:

Young Palestinians are educated to become active citizens who participate in developing a humanistic and democratic society, enhancing religious and national heritage in Palestine, and promoting mutual understanding and tolerance among religions and cultures.

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Bearing Witness funding provided by: The Constable Fund of The Episcopal Church and Carol and David Myers

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