

Princess Basma Center expands its reach to Palestinian children with disabilities

Your Easter Appeal gifts will offer 50 families hope for the future

When good things happen, word gets around.

With the recent expansion of the Jerusalem Princess Basma Center's outreach services to community clinics across the West Bank, more parents of children with disabilities are being referred to the Mother and Family Empowerment Program.

The only program of its kind available to Palestinian families, it offers critical support to more than 500 Palestinian families each year - leaving many more eligible families on the waiting list.



Thanks to your response to American Friends' 2023 Easter Appeal, we've raised more than \$80,000 with more continuing to come in from congregations. Your gifts will provide 50 families with the opportunity to receive much needed training and education.

Violette Mubarak, the Center's director speaks to the efficacy of the program. "The Mother and Family Empowerment Program is the key to unlocking so much potential for the children we treat here. Through this program our families are trained and empowered, they find faith and hope for a brighter future for themselves and their children."

She adds, "We help to change hearts and minds so that children with disabilities are given the dignity and life opportunities that all children deserve. Without the help of our international friends, we could not continue to provide this life-giving service."

Dedicated support for the program is crucial because reimbursement from the Palestinian Ministry of Health covers only 75 percent of the cost of each child's therapeutic services at the Center and covers none of the critical, comprehensive services Princess Basma offers to mothers and fathers who accompany their children.

Parents who take part in the program learn to replicate their children's therapies at home and also receive education about disabilities and training to empower them to become strong advocates for their children within their extended families and wider communities.

The residential program also allows parents who feel isolated because of their child's disability to gain support from the network of other parents they engage with at the Center. With the help of American Friends, that community of empowered parents grows and word continues to get around about the life-transforming ministry at the Jerusalem Princess Basma Center.

"Miracles are possible at the Basma Center. Together we learn that courage is stronger than fear."

– Fida, a mother from the West Bank

When generosity meets a much-needed autoclave

Q&A with Bishop Greg and Marti Rickel: Taking the next step along the pilgrim way

Bishop Greg and Marti Rickel have made many pilgrimages to the Holy Land. In October 2022 they accompanied AFEDJ trustees and staff on site visits to a dozen diocesan schools, hospitals, and centers for children with disabilities in Jordan, Palestine, and Israel. At St. Luke's Hospital in Nablus, the only Christian hospital in the northern West Bank, the Rickels were moved to by the hospital's desperate need for a new autoclave, a critical piece of equipment used to sterilize medical instruments. They recently talked with us about their decision and their perspectives on generosity. Bishop Rickel currently serves as chair of AFEDJ's Board.

AFEDJ: What draws you back to the Holy Land?

GR: For me it's the people, the Living Stones. I don't need to always see the holy sites but I do need to connect to the people I've come to know and love and care about. Equally important for me is to remember that this is our ancestry. It's important for us to be involved and curious to learn what is going on there and what people go through there. I can't forget leaving Gaza and the man who accompanied us said, as I walked to the checkpoint, "Don't forget us." I think of him a lot when I ask myself, "Why do I return?"

MR: We owe it to the people to keep showing up to support them. They are entrusted with our homeland. I wish we had a Christian version of the kibbutz – send people there for three to six months so



Bishop Greg and Marti Rickel in Jordan

the Christians there would know we won't forget them.

AFEDJ: Tell us about your first visit to St. Luke's Hospital.

MR: My first visit to St. Luke's was on my second or third pilgrimage. Greg's mother was on that trip, and she and I are both registered nurses. When the leaders at St. Luke's found out we were both nurses, they took us right up front of the group and gave us a tour of the ICU. We were both so honored to be there and to be welcomed by them. On this recent visit in October we had the opportunity to sit down with staff at lunch and ask about

the specific and pressing needs. The idea that they had an undependable, aging autoclave in a hospital that takes care of anyone who arrives at their door feels like: "They've got to have that!" My late step-father was a physician, and he'd say, "Of course that's the first thing they need!" We want to honor the people in our family who have left us gifts in ways that would be meaningful to them. Making it possible for St. Luke's to obtain a new autoclave is one way to do that.

AFEDJ: What would you say to those who want to support Holy Land Christians?

MR: I'd say you'll never be so gratified

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Students of all ages thrive at ETVTC

The Episcopal Technological and Vocational Training Center in Ramallah: Not just for young people any more

In 2000 Giovanni Anbar recognized the need for vocational training opportunities for Palestinian secondary students who were not succeeding in the traditional academic track. Under the auspices of the Diocese of Jerusalem and Anbar's steady leadership Ramallah's Episcopal Vocational and Technological Training Center (ETVTC) has thrived. Juniors and seniors from Ramallah and neighboring villages enroll in a two-year Information Technology or Culinary Arts/Hospitality diploma programs.

About five years ago, Anbar saw the need to offer programs for adults who struggled to find good-paying jobs amid the political and economic challenges they face in the West Bank. Currently ETVTC offers certificate programs approved by the Ministry of Labor for adults in culinary arts and mobile apps, including programs specifically designed for women entrepreneurs and incarcerated men.

Sisterhood Academy

In October 2022, ETVTC welcomed its third class of 36 women to the Sisterhood Academy, a six-month culinary arts and small-business training program for Palestinian women. For the first time, due to demand for the program, ETVTC offered two classes – one for women from Ramallah and surrounding villages and one from the northern West Bank city of Nablus. They will graduate from the program in May 2023.

Ahlam Hamid is a 42-year old mother of six children. Prior to enrolling in the Sisterhood Academy, Ahlam started her own home-based business called "Maria's Kitchen" offering home-made food and desserts for sale in her local community. After some time of working and cooking

at home, she decided to join the ETVTC course to acquire the knowledge and practical skills to increase her business's success.

In addition to the Sisterhood Academy, each year ETVTC offers a ten month, co-ed culinary arts program.

Mobile Application Program

Anmar Samour, a recent graduate of Palestine Technical University, enrolled in the ETVTC Mobile App Program to enhance her knowledge and to create her own application, an electronic library on Android. Anmar's main goal after successfully completing the course is to work for a tech company to gain more experience and then work as a freelancer.

Prisoner Culinary Arts Program

In the fall of 2022, after a two-year hiatus because of COVID, ETVTC resumed its partnership with the Palestinian Authority to offer a 60-hour course to prisoners at the Reform and Rehabilitation Center in Ramallah. In December 2022 12 men received a certificate in culinary arts and occupational safety to prepare them for the labor market upon their release. Anbar said he was recently approached by a man working in a local restaurant. Because only instructors are allowed in the prison, Anbar didn't recognize him but



Participants in the current Sisterhood Academy class

the man introduced himself as a graduate of the prisoner program and thanked him. "How gratifying to know that we have helped him create a new and productive life. It has big ripples throughout the community," Anbar said.

Generosity...

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because the need is so great. Giving back to Christians in the land of Jesus is one of the best things you can do. And it doesn't matter how much you give. It matters that you're giving.

GR: We just received a thank you letter from Salwa Khoury, an administrator at St. Luke's. She wrote that these are catastrophic times in Nablus and that knowing they have friends who will pay attention and help is so important. You'll never regret making a gift. Generosity always has that effect. We should try to make a stretch which for every person is different. Our giving, if it really means something to us, ought to be enough that we notice. Sacrificial giving is the spirit of Christianity.

A friend once visited with a 102-year-old parishioner. He asked her, "How do you get to live to be over 100?" She replied, "I never once in my life resisted a generous urge." I've never forgotten that.

"The success of our students, both in the high school programs and the adult programs, along with the support we get from our friends, inspire us to keep going."

– ETVTC Director Giovanni Anbar



Building Hope in the Holy Land

25 Old King's Highway North, Suite 13
Darien, Connecticut 06820

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**Questions about AFEDJ
or our work?**

Please be in touch!

Eileen Spencer, Executive Director
espencer@afedj.org | 914.924.9704

Heidi Shott, Communications Director
hshott@afedj.org | 207.592.7353

Bearing Witness

A Journey with Holy Land Christians

**AFEDJ's small group study program is now available for
churches and groups**



Bearing Witness is a free, video-based study program that shares the stories of people living in Palestine and Israel and the remarkable ministries of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem that bring hope and healing in the land where Jesus walked, healed, and taught.

AFEDJ provides ongoing support for churches and organizations in their implementation of the program.

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