

Archbishop Emeritus Abuna Chacour Offers Holiday Reflections

Abuna Chacour Christmas Letter

Beloved Friends and Supporters of MEEI,

One more time we are invited to prepare the Birth of the Prince of Peace. Indeed, he was born once, and he will not be born again, but we, human beings, we the believers in Christ, are invited to get ready to be born in Christ and to let Christ be born in us

We have been instructed to prepare for the birth of Christ in Bethlehem, which can be an act outside our own self. I think Christ, the King of Glory, is ready to be born in our lives, in our thoughts, in our actions. Are we ready to welcome him as "the grotto of the Nativity" did? As the shepherds did? As the Magi did? Yes, it's to us to be ready to welcome Christ not as outsider guest, but to welcome him and to be clothed with him, so that he grows, and we diminish. This is the kind of Christmas I wish you all.

I wish you to be a smile of hope around you, a smile to your community, a smile for your brothers and sisters, for those who are close by, and those who are far away. Humanity needs presently more than ever than before: The witness we are responsible to spread around without any restriction.

I want on behalf of all our faculty members, our students, children or adult, and on behalf of myself to wish you the courage and the Grace of God to let the Prince of Peace become alive in you.

Yours with friendship and much prayerful thoughts,

Abuna Elias Chacour
Archbishop Emeritus of Galilee



Pilgrims' President Thanks You

If there is one thing the COVID pandemic has taught us it is that we have to be adaptive to change. As we at Pilgrims look back on 2021, I give thanks for two changes. First, that we are finishing the year with Essrea Cherin, our new executive director. The board of directors could not be more pleased with the professionalism and passion she has already brought to her work. With Essrea and her new development/operations partner, Branwen Cale, we have great things ahead of us.

I am also thankful that in changing our ways of connection due to the pandemic, we have met some new friends and found some new supporters. We led five webinars this year, which is a new way of sharing news of justice and



peace in Israel and Palestine. In the process we met some of you and deepened connections with long-standing partners. Webinars are here to stay!

Even as I talk about the benefits of change, there is one thing that has not changed: Pilgrims continues its vital support of Mar Elias, its students and faculty, and our peace partners because of you! Your concern for peace and justice and your desire to foster a better world through education is as important as it has ever been. So thank you for your unchanging support. You are one of the peacemakers Jesus highlights in the Sermon on the Mount, supporting peacemakers like Abuna, the community of Mar Elias and our peace partners.

Rev. Dr. Peter Henry

Executive Director Note

Greetings dear friend,

You may have had the good fortune of meeting Abuna Chacour, Archbishop Emeritus and know that his words arise from a heart that is infused with love and compassion for all. He will present and deliver via video from the Galilee a holiday reflection. See the next section for details about how to sign up and enjoy this important event, a much needed vision for a more peaceful world.

I invite you to join our year-end campaign to raise an additional \$70,000, which will enable Mar Elias to provide scholarships to students negatively impacted by the COVID19 pandemic. Over 30% of Mar Elias' 3,000 students need tuition support.

To ensure the hopes and dreams for these children, we will continue to reach out for your partnership in 2022 — helping Mar Elias add much needed green spaces, playgrounds with sunshade, and new computers for the robotics program. These improvements will ensure the students remain competitive and succeed in their studies and ensure their spirits thrive and experience joy — ensuring their future as voices for peace and compassion in the world.

Thank you again for your continued support. Please visit our website to learn more about how your help contributes to a just peace in the Holy Land.



Holiday blessings,

Essrea Cherin
Executive Director
essrea@pilgrimsofibilin.org • 303-928-0923

Register for Abuna's Holiday Message

In times of COVID, when pilgrimages to the region have slowed or stopped altogether Abuna wishes to share his message with those who have come to appreciate his vision of peace in the Holy Land. We encourage you to join this special holiday event on December 28: any who register will receive an invitation to view Abuna's holiday message AND receive a recorded version to watch again with family or friends who missed the first viewing.

Register to attend **Abuna's Holiday Message:**
www.pilgrimsofibilin.org/abuna-holiday-2021

We thank you for making a generous contribution this holiday season.

2021 Webinars Sharing Stories from Peace Partners & Friends!



What is Easter like in Palestine?
Usama Nicola



Children of Bethlehem -
Katie Archibald-Woodward

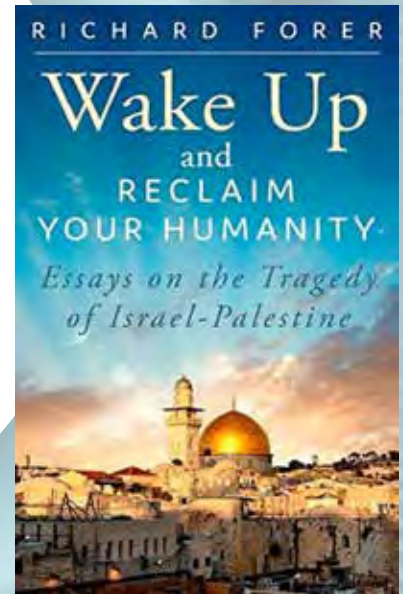


Mar Elias Educational Institutions -
MEEI Teachers and Administrators



In 2020 we began offering regular webinars to introduce partners and friends throughout Palestine and beyond to the Pilgrims community. This is a sampling from the past year.

The webinars have been very well attended and much appreciated. To view past webinars or to receive notification of future webinars, go to our website (which we fully revamped and completed this past year!) where you can input your email address and view videos of our webinars.



Wake Up and Reclaim Your Humanity - Author Richard Forer

HOPE STILL RISES

Tent of Nations
Webinar and Virtual Tour
with Daoud Nassar

Saturday, September 18

Tent of Nations - Daoud Nassar

Your gifts foster a just peace in Israel & Palestine through education



Rev. Susan Mozena and Abuna Chacour at Grosse Pointe

Abuna Visits Michigan

Abuna Chacour graced Grosse Pointe Memorial Church with an all-too brief visit. He shared stories of inter-religious dialogue, beginning with Mar Elias Educational Institutions in Ibillin and expanding over the years to ecumenical connections across Israel, in the Middle East and throughout the world.

His life's ministry rooted in his conviction that we all belong to one another as sisters and brothers made his stories of the hard and often very sad work of living that conviction as a Palestinian Arab Christian citizen of Israel very moving. His narrative was, indeed, a sermon we very much needed to hear, our own nation so in need of seekers of mercy, justice and peace. May God continue to bless his ministry.

You may view his moving and inspiring talk on the website at: www.pilgrimsofibilin.org/abuna-chacours-visit/



Mar Elias Students – Weizmann Institute Graduates

Mar Elias Educational Institutions

With the support of your gifts to Pilgrims of Ibillin, we were able to provide scholarships for 900 students in 2021. During the pandemic has been more difficult than usual as families are struggling to make ends meet. We are grateful for your continued generosity in helping MEEI to be a thriving education environment where students continue to earn high scores and opportunities to the best students in the nation.

GIVING TUESDAY

Help Translate Abuna Chacour's Book

During COVID shutdowns, Abuna Chacour found himself with an excess of time on his hands which he filled with the authoring of 3 books - one of which he considers to be the culmination of his life's learning and wisdom - contained within a book, **The Sermon on the Mount – The Way to the Kingdom**, on The Beatitudes. For this year's GIVING TUESDAY campaign, we decided to help get Abuna's message out to the English-speaking world by having it translated. We appreciate your generous contribution to support this effort. Please go to: www.pilgrimsofibilin.org/giving-tuesday/



Hiring New Executive Director & Operations/Development Admin

Pilgrims of Ibillin was led by Pilgrims board member and Interim Executive Director **Brenda Mehos** until the search for a new executive director was completed in May 2021 with the hiring



Essrea Cherin

of **Essrea Cherin**. Shortly thereafter a new Operations and Development Administrator in **Branwen Cale** was hired. Both Essrea and Branwen have extensive background in nonprofits and in working for a just peace in Israel and Palestine.



Branwen Cale

Bequest

We are ever grateful to the many supporters over the years who have included Pilgrims of Ibillin as a benefactor in their wills. Just this month we received word of two new gifts from long-time supporters, Mr. Alan Byars, for \$25,000, and Mrs. Peggy Shalabi for \$7,400. This money will help to support scholarships for over 40 students whose families could not otherwise afford the exceptional education offered at MEEI.



If you would like to include Pilgrims of Ibillin in your estate plans, please contact **Essrea Cherin, Executive Director**, essrea@pilgrimsofibilin.org or **303-928-0923**, for tax ID information, and she will add your name to the Legacy Society. Your gift may remain anonymous, if you like.



c/o Davidson College Presbyterian Church
P.O. Box 337
100 North Main Street
Davidson, NC 28036
www.pilgrimsofibilin.org

STAFF

Essrea Cherin - *Executive Director*
Branwen Cale - *Operations Administrator*
Dr. Brenda Mehos - *Pilgrimage Coordinator*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Rev. Dr. Peter Henry - *President*
Rev. Dr. Lucy Forster-Smith - *Vice President*
Ms. Sarah Morgan - *Secretary*
Kip Nickel - *Consultant/Treasurer*

Ms. Halfa Bautista
Rev. Don Brown
Rev. Gail Doering
Rev. Dr. Mary Sue Dreier
Ms. Rima Kawas
Ms. Judy Masserang
Dr. Brenda Mehos
Rev. Bobby Morris
Rev. Susan Mozena
Ms. Wren Shealy
Rev. Dr. James Thomas
Rev. Anne Weirich

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Travel with us on a Pilgrimage in 2022

"I travel around the world in a way that tries to open my mind and give me empathy and inspire me to come home and make this world a better place."

– Rick Steves

Living Stones Pilgrimage to Israel & Palestine 1 March - 14 March 2022

Pilgrimage Leaders:

Instructor, Rev. Dr. James Thomas
West Bank Tour Guide, Usama Nicola
Tour Coordinator, Brenda Mehos



Living Stones Pilgrimages - Father Chacour says, "We invite visitors to see the ruins of holy sites but also engage with the 'living stones' — the people who make their homes there."

Since 1995, Pilgrims of Ibillin has taken nearly 350 individuals on two-week pilgrimages to Israel and Palestine. Led by Pilgrims staff, board members, and local partners in the West Bank and the Galilee, we visit Christians, Muslims, and Jews who are working creatively to plant and nourish the seeds of a just peace. Our tours include visits to various holy sites and conversations which connect our experiences with our faith.

For prices, itinerary, and to indicate your interest, contact:

Brenda Mehos at brenda@pilgrimsofibilin.org or +1-303-928-0923

Thank you
for your generous
contributions & support

