



Pilgrims of Ibillin

Annual Report 2021



*Cultivating a just peace for all
in Israel and Palestine through education*

Pilgrims of Ibillin Annual Report 2021

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Executive Director Message

2021 was a year of transition for Pilgrims of Ibillin.



I am very grateful for former board member and interim Executive Director Brenda Mehos for all she has brought to Pilgrims of Ibillin. Before I arrived in May, Brenda created an array of organizational systems and improvements that contributed to a very successful year. In addition to my hiring, we also went through a much-needed transition from an outdated to a much-improved database, which will enable us to create far more efficiencies in the work that we do.

Pilgrims of Ibillin raised more than we have in past years as well as more than budgeted, allowing us to be more generous with our partners in Israel and Palestine than previously.

Once again, we had to accept the fact that the COVID virus would interfere again in plans to bring a group to visit Mar Elias Educational Institution and our peace partners, for another year.

Given our desire to share Palestine with folks in the US, we thus focused our attention on creating webinar programs to share Palestine with our community — these were very well-received and we continue to pursue additional programs as a means to share stories of our friends who seek means to connect outside of Palestine.

Also this year we continued the Giving Tuesday campaign that Brenda Mehos initiated in 2020 and successfully raised the funds to support the cost of translating Abuna Chacour's most recent book, *Sermon on the Mount: the Way to the Kingdom*. Stay tuned as we'll be sure to let you know when it is available in English.

We do hear from our partners that the past two years have brought considerable challenges, over and above what is already a significant load, with the complete lack of visitors and thus considerably reduced revenues.

Following are some of the highlights from the past year.

We do what we can to help support our partners and are grateful to you, helping us do so.

In gratitude,

Esrea Cherin, Executive Director

Abuna Elias Chacour Visit to 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.

View Abuna's moving and inspiring talk on the website.

Webinar Series: Reaching New Audiences – Connecting with Friends

In 2021 we produced webinars as a means to connect supporters in the US with our partners in Palestine, and to share their stories. In the absence of in-person travel, we wanted to touch hearts as broadly as we could — and indeed, in some ways were able to reach even more people than our annual pilgrimage trips are able to.

We hosted the following webinars in 2021, with a total of 386 attendees and raised over \$6,800 in webinar donations. With webinar promotion we were able to engage over 300 new people who had not previously been part of our community.

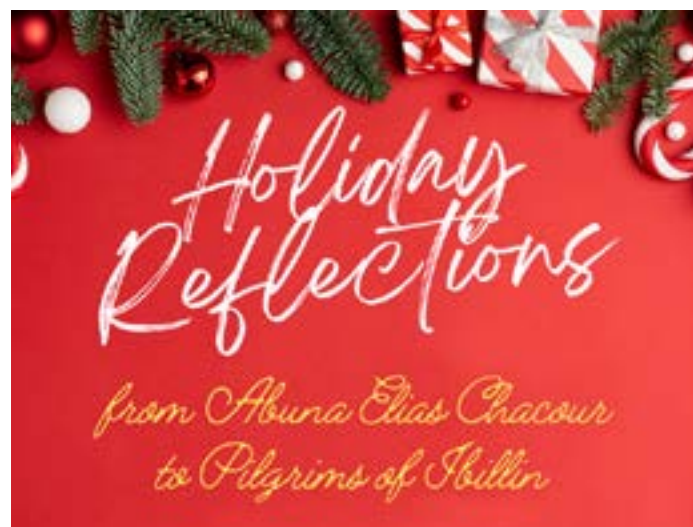
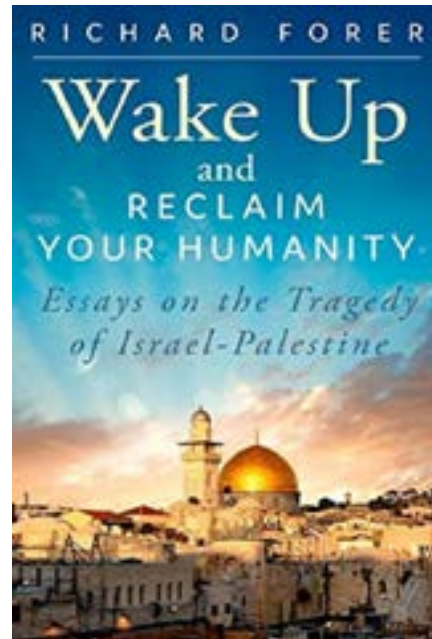
The following are 2021's programs, each of which can be viewed on our website. (link to new page)

- i. **What Does Easter Mean To Palestinian Christians? - March 10** — Wi'am Director Zoughbi Al Zoughbi in Bethlehem and Tour Director Usama Nicola, 49 attended, \$1,339 raised from 22 unique donors (over 50% of attendees)
- ii. **Spring Catch Up With MEEI - April 26** - MEEI administrators and teachers — 43 attended, \$1,294 raised from 16 unique donors (over 37% of attendees)
- iii. **Wake Up and Reclaim Your Humanity - May 19** - with author Rich Forer — 93 attended, \$667 from 18 unique donors (or 22.5% of attendees)
- iv. **Children of Bethlehem - July 27** - with Katie Archibald-Woodward — 56 attended, Funds Raised: \$1,089 from 17 unique donors (this includes one \$500 gift) (47% of attendees)
- v. **Tent of Nations - Sept. 18** - with Daoud Nasser — 88 attended, Funds Raised: \$2445 from 30 unique donors (\$2100 to Tent of Nations as a donation, \$345 to Pilgrims) (39% of attendees) *Video not recorded.*
- vi. **Holiday Program Featuring Message from Abuna Chacour - Dec. 28** - includes Fr. Firas of Zababdeh, Hope School Director Khader Saba, Ghada Mansi Program Director, Gaza Maia Water Project, and the Seraj Library Project — 57 attended, it's hard to say how much was raised as the webinar fell in the midst of our end of year fundraising campaign.



2021 Webinar Series

Click on pictures to view webinar video recordings.



Mar Elias Educational Institutions

With your generous support, in 2021 we were able to send \$144,000 to Mar Elias Educational Institution (MEEI). These funds not only helped cover scholarships for over 900 students whose families needed financial assistance, but also provided funds to assist in renovating the Guest House and playground infrastructure (see more about this in the next section) at MEEI, updating and upgrading computers, printers, kindergarten toys, and water fountains.

During COVID pandemic times even more families than usual struggle to make ends meet. In 2021, over 30% of students' families needed financial support to cover the cost of tuition. This is up from 20% that have received tuition assistance in past years. Your gifts help hundreds of students to attend Mar Elias!



Scholarships make lasting impact over decades to come with MEEI alumni bringing deeply held values of peace, justice, and reconciliation into the greater community upon graduation.

You may wonder, where MEEI students go after high school? How many go on to college? And of these, how many in seek higher education in Israel and how many go abroad?

English teacher Dr. Emil Halloun estimates that 60% of high school graduates attend college. According to an article in Israel Hayom in 2020, 15,000 Palestinian-Israeli students studied abroad or in the West Bank in 2019. Many Mar Elias graduates wish to go into medicine because medical professionals are needed in Israel and its a career that is available to Palestinian-Israelis.

Some of the many challenges in education in Israel...

Primary education is highly segregated. According to Foreign Policy Magazine, 90% of Palestinian-Israelis live in all Palestinian communities. According to The Borgen Project, "Separating children by ethnicity and religion limits their ability to learn about one another's culture firsthand. In addition to learning in isolation from their Jewish counterparts, Arab-Israeli schools receive less funding and do not meet the same educational benchmarks. Arab-Israelis consistently lag behind in standardized test scores, high school graduation rates, and university matriculation (college entrance exams). Per pupil funding can be almost 88 percent lower than that of Jewish students."

Originally, Mar Elias schools had Jewish students as well as Christians, Muslims, and Druzes. Sadly, after the 2nd intifada in 2000 that was no longer the case



MEEI students participated in the prestigious Weizmann Institute

After 2000, military education was required in Israeli high schools for Jewish students and the Mar Elias schools could not comply. Currently, there are two Jewish teachers at Mar Elias and the goal is to attract more. Mar Elias has been involved in multiple projects over the years to give their students opportunities to meet with Jewish students from other schools.

Mar Elias high school students matriculation scores, graduation rates, and standardized test scores are higher than the Israeli-Palestinian public high schools. It attests to the quality of the education and the realization of Father Chacour's dream of providing a quality education to the Ibillin population and surrounding villages.

We thank you for your part in making this a reality!

What are some of the biggest needs at MEEI in coming years?

- Laptops and tablets are always in short supply
- A cafeteria
- The gym needs to be renewed including the addition of air-conditioning, toilets, and showers
- Underground parking for teachers
- Green spaces on campus

Do MEEI students interact with Jewish students?

Jewish students from Tel Aviv visited Mar Elias students' homes, most commenting that they had never been in a Palestinian home before. Students reported that they had a very positive experience and bonded with the others over music! Many students from both schools enjoyed and sang or played instruments and this made all the difference when their interactions had to move to online due to the pandemic!

What makes Mar Elias Educational Institutions unique? What sets them apart from other schools and educational programs?

There are many answers to this question, and one is the emphasis that is placed on peace and justice woven throughout the education from kindergarten through a student's senior year in high school.

For example, in 9th grade, MEEI students take a course on forgiveness, based on curriculum developed by Dr. Richard Enright, founder of the International Forgiveness Institute. Here's what has been said about this program:

Teaching
the art and power of
forgiveness to children
may be both the best and the fastest way
to positively change our world...
Forgiveness
has the potential to transform communities
that have not known peace for decades and
reshape our world."

The Mar Elias schools are steeped in the ways of peace, reconciliation, respect, and justice for all peoples regardless of ethnic or religious affiliation or background.

Instilled in the curriculum from kindergarten through high school, are beliefs that

*"God does not kill. All are born as babies
created in the image and likeness of God.
Christians, Muslims, and Jews are blood brothers,
children of Abraham. Peace with justice is the dream
and the right of all human beings."*

Such truths provide the students with guiding principles that last a lifetime.

We are proud to support such a compassionate education when it is so desperately needed to prevent more bloodshed.

A Final Gift Can Make a Lasting Impact

A long-time friend of the Mar Elias Schools passed in 2017 and left an incredible gift. Remembered as generous and committed to making a difference, Jean Blackwell Hopson of Winston-Salem North Carolina left a total gift of \$890,000 that went directly to MEEI through Pilgrims of Ibillin after her death.



Her gift has provided many upgrades to the Mar Elias schools these past 3 years including not only the middle and high school buildings but also meeting and administrative spaces. Money from her bequest funded a much-needed playground shelter in the outside kindergarten area in the spring of 2021.

Above: Beautiful new look for the MEEI junior high school thanks to Jean Hopson's bequest.

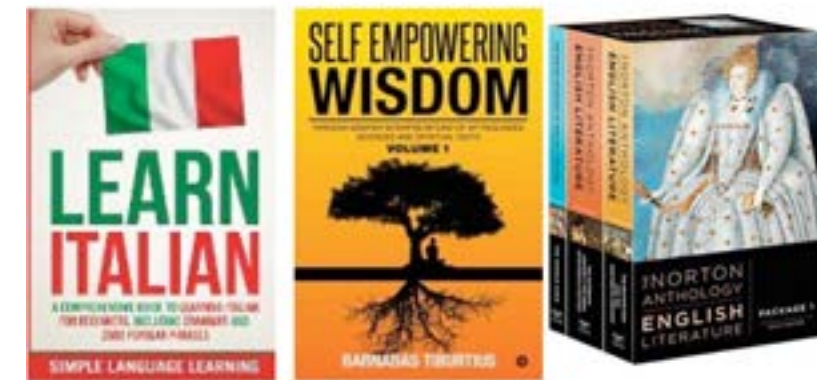


A new teacher's meeting room, made possible by Jean Hopson's bequest.

Please consider Pilgrims of Ibillin and MEEI when planning your will.

It can leave a lasting impact.

Gifts that Make a Difference



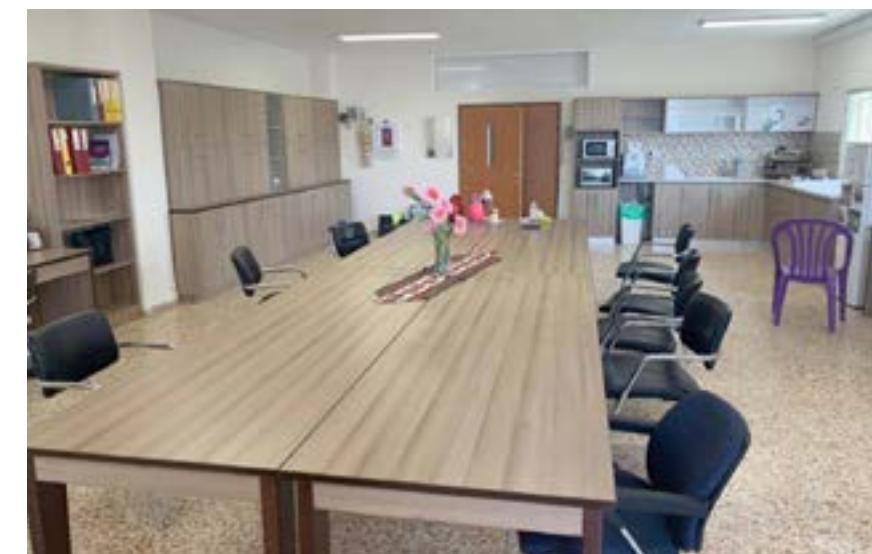
Thank you to White Memorial Presbyterian Church in Raleigh, North Carolina! Members of White Memorial reached out at the beginning of the year wishing to make a difference for Mar Elias Students and asked for a designated project. Mar Elias suggested purchasing books for the library and White Memorial came through by donating \$1200 worth of books.

English teacher Dr. Emil Haloun said recently that the high school students are thrilled with the new additions to the library, and really enjoying the foreign language books in particular. Many of MEEI's students dream of studying abroad. Europe in general offers educational opportunities for higher education.

One book was purchased for the MEEI guest house where many of us stay when on Living Stones Pilgrimages in Ibillin. *Learn Arabic In A Month* by R. Chawla will be useful for guests to Ibillin!



Translation of Abuna Chacour's recent book, Sermon on the Mount.



Newly renovated teachers' lounge at MEEI

Exceptional Students

Early in 2021, we featured the story of a recent MEEI graduate. An extraordinary Mar Elias alumna, Noor Abu Hjoor, tells us about her senior year at MEEI, her exchange year in the states, and what she's up to today.

Your gifts have an incredible impact on a life!

I actually had two senior years in high school. I applied to the Youth Exchange and Study program (YES), funded by the U.S. Department of State, and, during the US school year, 2016-2017, I attended school in Oshkosh, WI, for my "first" senior year. I lived with a WONDERFUL host family. We developed a strong bond and I learned a lot from them and my AFS liaison.



High School with Host Family in U.S.A.

While in high school, Oshkosh North, I participated on the volleyball team, was an active member in Key Club and Rotary, was the co-founder of an Arabic club in my high school that was run by both me and, Maryse, a Lebanese exchange student, and co-managed a blood drive campaign as a leadership class project. I made over a hundred cultural presentations in elementary schools, middle schools, my high school, various clubs and at the University of Oshkosh.

Being an exchange student in the United States has given me the opportunity to contribute to the well being of the less fortunate, so I volunteered throughout the whole school year with refugees, and I participated in volunteering events in the Day by Day Warming Shelter. In addition, I was part of Oshkosh Rotary and engaged in community service projects.

Mar Elias High School

After my exchange year in the United States was over, I attended Mar Elias High School for my "second" senior year, 2017-2018. During that senior year, in addition to my studies, I helped Abdalla and Hassan, two former classmates, organize an international book club for which we read the book, *Balcony on the Moon: Coming of Age in Palestine*, by Ibtisam Barakat with several students at Mar Elias and in the United States. Archbishop Chacour also participated with us.

Read Noor's full story on our website.

Gratitude

"Due to your help prayers and your assistance, we were able to set the building ready and our hearts be strongly welcoming all our children, Christian, Muslims and Druze alike. Our teachers, Christian, Muslims, Druze and Jewish are your ambassadors to educate our children on the "unity within the diversity."

We thank you for your assistance no matter how large or small it has been and it would be."

— Father Elias Chacour

Peace Partner Gifts 2021

Peace Partner	2021 Grant
Diyar Consortium - Bethlehem Soccer team	\$ 2,000
Seraj Libraries	1,000
Wi'am	9,840
Zababdeh Job Creation & Scholarships	9,000
Hope School Beit Jala	9,000
Maia Water Project Gaza	2,000
Total Peace Partners Grants	\$32,840

In 2021 we were able to give generously to our six peace partners as follows: The need for support for each of these programs and organizations is significant, as each one provides for the needs of Palestinian society in unique ways.

We appreciate your gifts to allow us to continue giving to maintain their valuable and critically needed contributions to Palestinian society.

Peace Partner – Wi'am The Palestinian Conflict Transformation Center

NIV

*He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.
And what does the Lord require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God.*

—Micah 6:8

Contemplate the following prophetic terms in our relationship with Pilgrims of Ibillin:

Act Justly

The first step in the right path that our lord is calling us to act justly. Justice is not merely about defending personal or communal rights or condemning social evils or denouncing violence and terrorism. Biblical justice starts in the heart where conscience and consciousness coexist.

Acting justly requires sacrifice, empathy, commitment, perseverance and action; it is not mere talk, sympathy, wishful thinking or lip service. Challenging injustice on all levels is what our Lord entices us to do!



This is the walk and talk of Pilgrims of Ibillin and Wi'am.

Peace Partner – Wi'am continues

Speaking about occupation, confiscation of land, building settlement, family separation, denying all kinds of freedom, human trafficking, refugees and displaced people — may make us appear caring and interested, but words are meaningless or cheap if they are divorced from acts of agape, work, justice and mercy. Words do nothing to ease the pain of suffering. Acting justly means Wi'am and Pilgrims of Ibillin work to correct wrongs.

Regardless of the social, economic and political systems that had created injustices, we are determined to take action to end the suffering of people, free them from oppression and help them celebrate life fully with dignity and integrity.

Love Mercy

I think and I believe that Pilgrim's and Wi'am's people have combined compassion and love as strong emotions with practical demonstration of empathy and kindness through their tireless actions of solidarity and commitment.

The next command offered by God in Micah 6:8 is "to love mercy." According to the Encyclopedia of the Bible, mercy requires both "an inward disposition and an outward action".

It is evident that mercy combines a strong emotional element, usually identified as pity, compassion, or love, with some practical demonstration of kindness in response to the condition or needs of the object of mercy."

— Encyclopedia of the Bible



Walk Humbly

The third command in Micah 6:8 is "to walk humbly with your God."

Wi'am's staff strive to walk in the steps of our lord Jesus who comes to the world to serve and not to be served. The interest of the people is more important than our own that is why we offer mediation, counseling and psycho- and social support. We serve the community at-large, help the needy and work with the marginalized and the downtrodden. We also work with children, women and the elderly. We try to offer services with a smile. We receive freely and we also offer free services.

Peace Partner – Wi'am *continues*

As in Philippians 2: 3-11: Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men...

No one doubts that humility is a hallmark of Wi'am's work. All of our staff recognize that without God's grace, we would be useless.

Walking humbly with God is of key importance when working with people living in oppression, poverty, tyranny, and who suffer under Occupation where all their human rights are violated.

Too often, we think that third world's people have nothing to teach or to share. In contrast, walking humbly with God recognizes the strength, the compassion and agape that we all possess and can share with the grace of God.

Act Justly, Love Mercy, Walk Humbly...

...is our talk and walk in life. We can't do that without our partners (Pilgrims of Ibillin) who give our work more dimension, more depth and more meaning.

Yes, we are walking in the shoes of the Pilgrims of Ibillin and adhering to the Bible's guidance to, Colossians 3:12: Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.

— Zoughbi Zoughbi, Wi'am

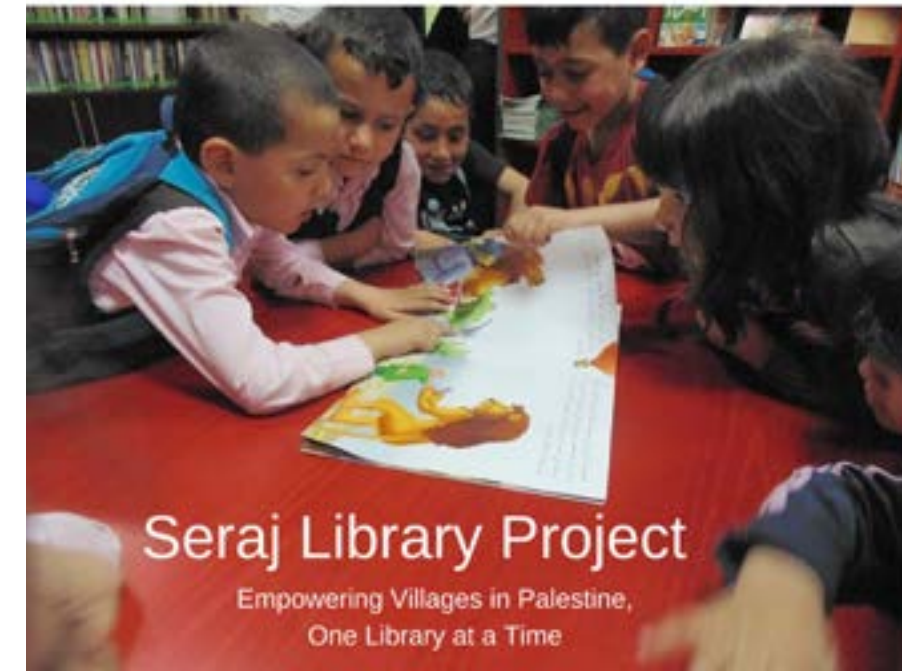


See a video of our friends at Wi'am to hear how they were impacted by the double challenge of a global pandemic during the time of COVID and an ongoing military occupation of Palestine in this 2021 video update.

Peace Partner – Seraj Story Telling Center

Seraj's newest library in Kufur Aqab, Palestine will include a first-of-its-kind Story Telling Center.

We talk a lot about the importance of storytelling at Seraj. In fact, all of our work and activities are born out of stories...rediscovering the lost ones and preserving both the significant and seemingly insignificant ones, then bringing them to life through the interpretation of various kinds of artists, so the stories come alive again, in our communities. Stories tell us where we've come from and can guide us where we are going. They should tell the truth about our past so we can begin to heal as we face the future. They connect us to those who have come before, those around us, and those yet to come.



This is why we continue to be excited about Seraj's Storytelling Center, the first of its kind in Palestine. We worked with the municipality of Kufur Aqab and Riwaq Center for Architectural Preservation to renovate two 150 year old houses in the village of Kufur Aqab. Riwaq completed the renovation beautifully and gave the keys to Seraj, so that we can begin the work of furnishing and stocking the insides. These two homes will contain a library, a cafe/study center, a small office for Seraj, and most notably, our new Storytelling Center.

The space is charming and inspiring, well-lit and full of delightful little nooks and crannies. Each stone seems to hold untold stories of the generations that have come before. We envision the Seraj library and storytelling center to be a place to gather, dream and inspire. A spark of light and hope in the middle of settlements, checkpoints and overcrowded and underfunded schools and apartment buildings.

We have begun developing a curriculum to train people in the collection, preservation and telling of stories. We are working with like-minded organizations to share expertise and resources.

As always, none of this is possible without the support of all our friends in the U.S. Your commitment to establishing libraries in Palestine, your belief that Palestinians deserve the right to live with dignity, and your generosity to communities living across the globe is both astounding and humbling. We continue to be thankful for each of you and look forward to sharing our updates on our progress.

Watch a 2021 Video capturing the work that Seraj was up to last year.

Peace Partner – Zababdeh’s Father Firas

A day in the life of a Melkite priest in occupied Palestine

This morning Father Firas was very tired after celebrating the Liturgy for his community in Zababdeh and then driving to Nablus passing through several Israeli checkpoints on the way. Nablus is about 20 miles away, but the drive can take hours depending on the check-points and the deteriorating condition of the road.



He returned home to Zababdeh around 9 p.m. His Khouriyeh suggested he pick up some olives from his grandfather’s olive trees, but he was tired so he said “No.” However, he relented, changed his clothes and prepared to pick them up. He returned with the olives and got ready to retire for the evening. At 11 p.m. he received a phone call from the bishop’s office telling him that a driver would be at the border in one hour to give him his monthly salary. He dressed and prepared to drive to the border crossing which is about 40 minutes away.

Upon approaching the border he stopped his car and put on his black robe. This proved to be a mistake because the soldier standing nearby was carefully observing all his movements.

Father Firas walked to the main gate but the soldier stopped him. Fear began to overwhelm him as he remembered that a doctor was killed by the occupation army at that very spot some time ago.

The priest walked a short distance and noticed a taxi coming from the other direction. The taxi stopped by the soldier and greeted him as if he knew him. He told the soldier that he wanted to give the blue envelope he had with him to the priest who was standing nearby. The soldier said “No!”

The taxi driver begged the soldier just to leave the envelope on the rock next to him where the priest could pick it up and leave. “No!” said the soldier again. The soldier insisted that the priest go to the gate and be processed through the checkpoint. This system of harassment can take hours.

Once on the other side he could meet the taxi driver who had no permit to enter the occupied territory. Soon a man with a Jeep arrived and offered to drive through the border crossing, pick up the envelope and come back for 50 shekels (about \$15). Father said “Shukran (thank you), but no.” He was thinking that the man could cross the border, pick up the money and then disappear and his monthly salary would be lost. This month, no food, no school tuition he reasoned.

Peace Partner – Zababdeh *continues*

Then he received a call from the taxi driver informing that a man is going to cross on foot and bring the envelope. He will be wearing a blue t-shirt. So, Father said okay and waited at the crossing. A minute passed, then two minutes and then 10



minutes. The priest was panicking. The money had been lost. Suddenly a bearded young man in a blue shirt appeared. “Are you the priest?” he asked. He handed over the envelope. Yes, now there would be food for the family, alhamdulillah, thanks be to God.

On the way back to Zababdeh, in the middle of the night, he mused, “If only people knew how much the occupation controls our lives, how Israelis and Americans think that we are terrorists, and how everyone considers us to be serious security risks.” Tears began to roll down his cheeks.

It’s nearly sunrise when he returns and finally is able to sleep. †

...

† This story is based on testimony from Father Elias Diab, pastor of St. George Melkite Parish in Zababdeh, Occupied Palestine. Reprinted with permission from SOPHIA - Winter 2021

Hear Father Firas share an update with Board of Directors member Rev. Don Brown in this 2021 update video.

Peace Partner – Hope School

Despite the COVID19 and its impact on our children and on the whole academic process, this year was a productive year, “a year of success and achievements” as one of our staff described it; 15 out of 15 of our children graduated successfully; three of them were diagnosed as slow-learners, and their academic performance was very low before they came to our school. They came from a special education school dedicated for slow-learners. No other school would have accepted them, but Hope School did.

After the declaration of the results, Sami’s mother came to the school with a plate of sweets and thanked the staff for the opportunity given to her son. She said: “I knew my son will do it, but no one would believe me. Thank you, Hope School, because you trusted me and helped my son to be as normal as other students.” Further, one of the graduates, “George” had three F’s when he was admitted to Hope School three years ago. This year, his results in the “Tawjihi” exams was 83.1 %. His father visited the school to express his gratitude and to confirm that, “Hope School has changed the course of my son. I am sure without you, my son would have been working in the black market.”

One of our graduates, Sari Salim Zeidan graduated from Hope School in 2010, he attended Bethlehem University, where he received a bachelor’s degree in social development. Sari worked at a local NGO dedicated to social and economic development for three years, after which he moved to Shepherd’s Society as the Head of Department. Recently, Sari visited Hope School and expressed his excitement and appreciation: “I am very happy to visit the school after such a long time, this is the place where I started my dreams which became true after graduation; thanks for all that you do for the children of Hope School”



Sari Salim Zeidan

In return, we thank God for such blessings, we thank all our friends who support these vulnerable children and provide them with new opportunity to restore their confidence and hope needed to build a blossoming future. We enjoy working at Hope School... for its impact and its role in building and transplanting new values in the minds and hearts of our children

Watch a 2021 update video with Hope School Director Khader Saba.

Peace Partner – Diyar Women’s Soccer Team

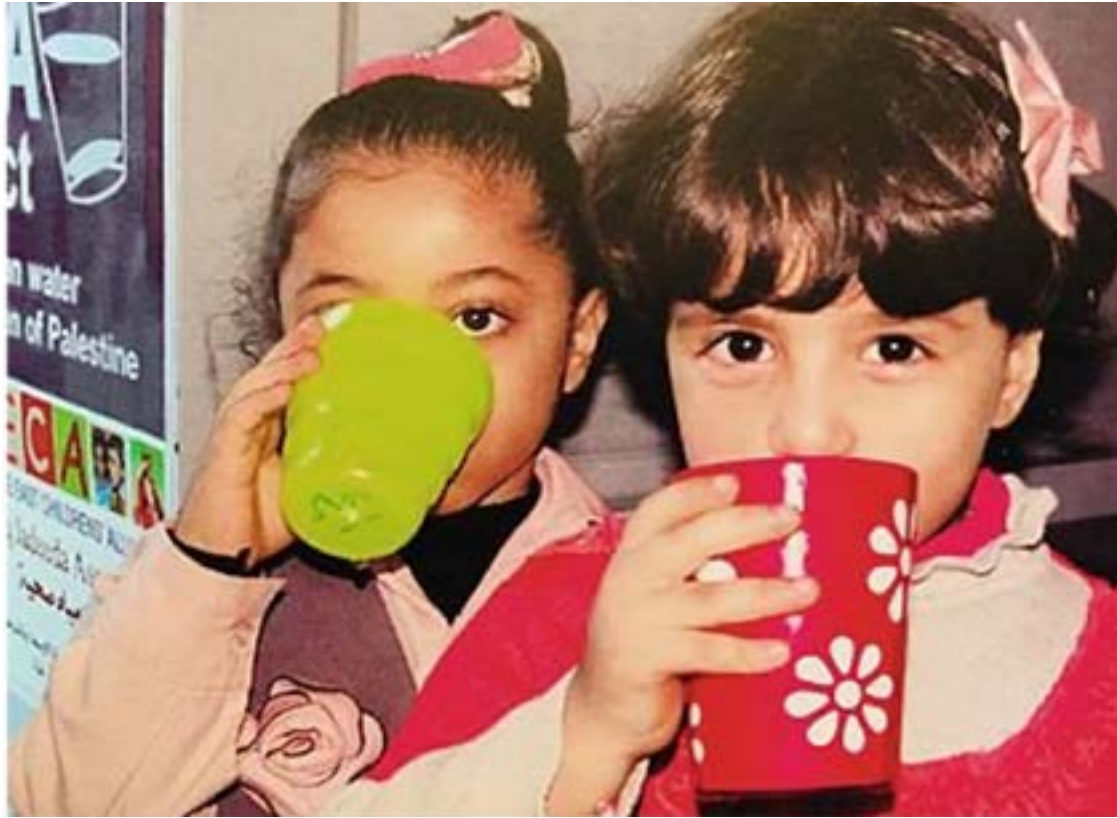
Congratulations to the Diyar Women’s Soccer Team for winning the Palestinian National Championship in 2021! We’re so proud of the diligence and hope displayed through the young women in Palestine!

Pilgrims of Ibillin annual program grant supports the girls’ soccer program by paying fees for trainers who work with the program’s coaches every summer. Such support contributes to empowering Palestinian young women.



Peace Partner – Maia Water Project in Gaza

There is a growing water crisis in Palestine. In Gaza, 95% of water is unfit for human consumption. Numerous military attacks (including this most recent assault in the spring of 2021) on the Gaza Strip have devastated Gaza's water infrastructure and the twelve-year siege of Gaza has created a shortage of pipes, building materials, fuel and electricity.



The water in Gaza is polluted with untreated sewage, agricultural chemicals, and it is brackish from seawater. Gaza's water crisis poses grave health risks to children. With current Israeli attacks, many water networks have been damaged and there is only electricity for a few hours a day which means that water purification units that treat Gaza's polluted water are not functioning. Now 97% of water in Gaza is unfit for human consumption.

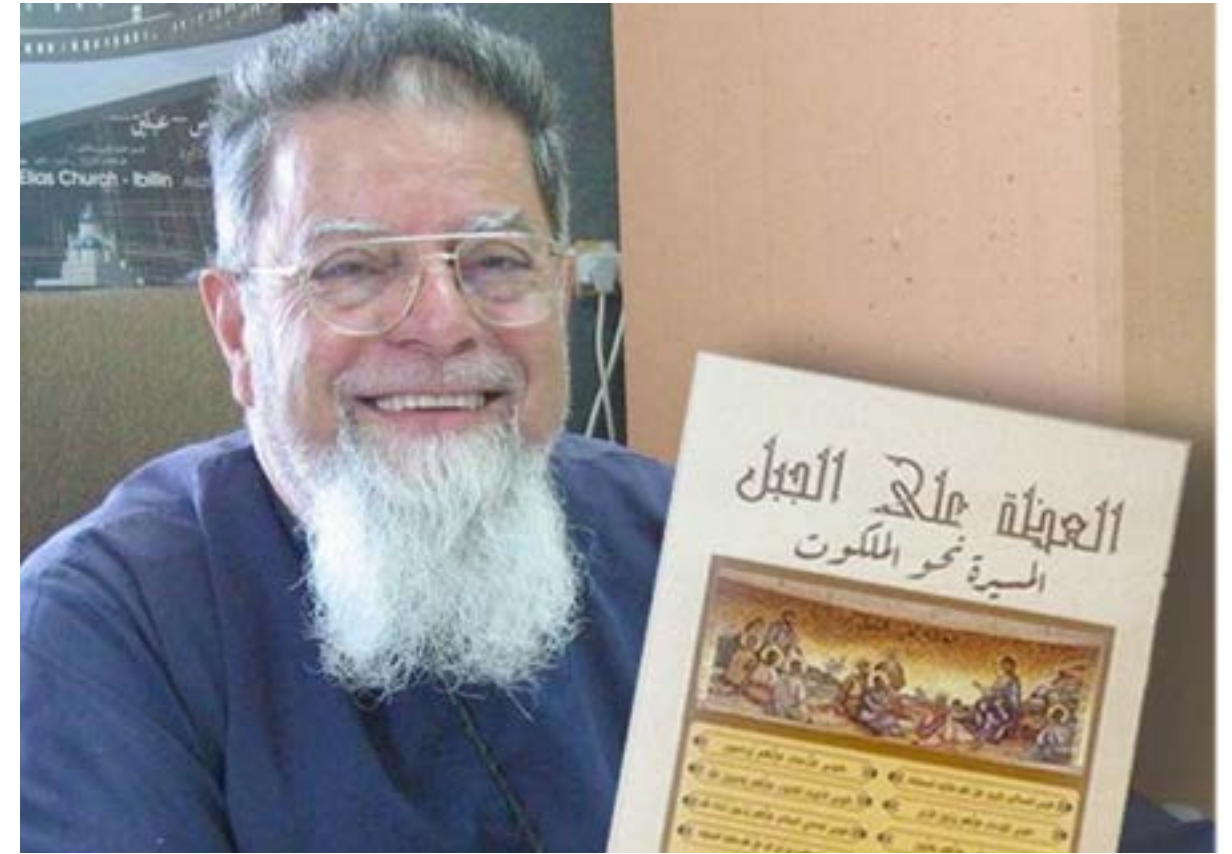
In September 2009, the Middle East Children's Alliance (MECA) responded to this crisis by launching the Maia Project (Arabic for "water") to provide Palestinian children with clean, safe drinking water by installing water purification and desalination units in schools throughout the Gaza Strip.

Pilgrims of Ibillin is proud to be part of the effort that has successfully provided over 90,000 children with safe and clean drinking water in Gaza.

Watch a video from Maia Water Project Coordinator Ghada Mansi.

Giving Tuesday 2021

Pilgrims during this year's **#GivingTuesday** campaign raised over \$10,000 to support the English translation of Abuna Elias Chacour's new book, ***The Sermon on the Mount – The Way to the Kingdom***.



Abuna wrote this book in 2020 during the height of the COVID19 pandemic. He describes this book, which focuses on a deep understanding of The Beatitudes, as the culmination of his life's work in faith and peace-building.

"If I summarize all the book about the Beatitudes, it would be to say to every reader: Don't stop here, go beyond what you read, and listen to the spirit telling you what is in between the lines."

— Abuna Elias Chacour

View a video of Abuna Chacour speaking about his recent book.

Living Stones Pilgrimages

In years past we typically led at least two trips to Israel and Palestine each year. In 2021, due to COVID, we were again unable to travel to the region.



We very much hope that in the fall of 2022 that will change with our first trip in three years. We currently plan to bring a group September 29 - October 11, 2022.

If you would like information about this and future trips, complete the contact information form on our Pilgrimage webpage. Our Pilgrimage Coordinator Brenda Mehos will contact you.

[Pilgrimage Interest](#)

Hear from past Living Stones pilgrims about their experience and from Palestinian partners about welcoming guests to Palestine in a March 26 webinar.

Come and See, Go and Tell March Webinar

[View March Webinar](#)

Peace Partner Beneficiaries



2021 Pilgrims of Ibillin Financial Report

Pilgrims of Ibillin Profit & Loss

January - December 2021

	Total
Income	
4000 Revenue from Direct Contributions	
4010 Individual Contributions	\$ 208,535.62
4040 Nonprofit Contributions	32,076.75
4050 Bequest Income	32,423.31
Total 4000 Revenue from Direct Contributions	\$ 273,035.68
4600 Special Project Income	
4610 Pilgrimage Trip	0.00
Total 4600 Special Project Income\$	0.00
5400 Revenue from Other Source	
5490 Misc Revenue	17.56
Total 5400 Revenue from Other Source	\$ 7.56
Total Income	\$ 273,053.24
Expenses	
7000 Grants, Contracts, & Direct Assistance	
7010 Grants to Individuals	2,352.00
7020 Grants & Assistance to Organizations	179,497.84
Total 7000 Grants, Contracts, & Direct Assistance	\$ 181,849.84
7200 Salaries & Related Expenses	
7225 Executive Director Compensation	39,034.09
7230 Administrative Assistant Compensation	15,576.09
7240 Payroll Taxes	2,175.84
7250 Payroll Service Fees	460.05
7290 Workers Comp	277.21
Total 7200 Salaries & Related Expenses	\$ 57,523.28
7500 Contract Service Expenses	
7510 Donor/Contact Management	4,387.17
7515 Accounting Fees	19,415.90
7530 Professional Fees - Other	-1,148.00
7540 Honorariums	1,213.61

Pilgrims of Ibillin Profit & Loss *continues*

7545 Donated Professional Services	-177.65
7550 Marketing Expenses	598.00
7555 Website Work	6,889.67
Total 7500 Contract Service Expenses	\$ 31,178.70
8100 Nonpersonnel Expenses	
8110 Supplies	64.08
8130 Telephone & Telecommunications	345.51
8140 Postage & Shipping	4,033.81
8160 Computer Software & Hardware	341.79
8170 Printing & Copying	3,540.18
8190 Internet/Web/Hosting Fees	1,166.19
Total 8100 Nonpersonnel Expenses	\$ 9,491.56
8200 Facility & Equipment Expenses	
8270 Depreciation & Amortization	363.66
Total 8200 Facility & Equipment Expenses	\$ 363.66
8300 Travel & Meetings Expenses	
8320 Meals	98.00
8340 Airfare	1,183.56
Total 8300 Travel & Meetings Expenses	\$ 1,281.56
8500 Other Expenses	
8520 Insurance - Non-Employee Related	715.00
8540 Recruitment & Staffing	255.00
8550 Bank Fees	402.81
8560 Merchant Processing Fees	1,671.33
8570 Advertising/Donor Relations	0
8580 State Filing Fees	11,406.72
8590 Other Expenses	300.00
Total 8500 Other Expenses	\$ 14,750.86
Total Expenses	\$ 296,439.46
Net Operating Income	\$ 23,386.22

Thank You to Our Donors in 2021

19 Faith Based Institutions Gave \$35,901

Black Mountain Presbyterian Church
Charlemont Federated Church
Desert Hills Presbyterian Church
Emmanuel Lutheran Church
First Congregational Church of Houston
First Presbyterian Church — Lansing
First Presbyterian Church of Ann Arbor
First Presbyterian Church of Livermore
First Presbyterian Church of Snohomish
First United Methodist Church of Boulder
Grace Presbyterian Church - Walnut Creek
Grace United Methodist Church - Questors Class
Grosse Pointe Memorial Presbyterian Church
Holy Cross Melkite Catholic Church
Mt. Hermon Presbyterian Church
Newport Center United Methodist Church
Presbyterian Foundation
St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church - Santa Barbara
St. Monica Catholic Church
Valley Presbyterian Church - Portola Valley
White Memorial Presbyterian Church

Planned Giving Totaled \$32,423

Peggy Shalabi \$7,423
Alan Byars \$25,000

442 Individual Donors Gave \$229,088

\$10,000 +

Christa and Clay Midkiff
Phil Myers
John E Stewart
Samir and Eileen Tarsha

\$5,000 - \$9,999

John and Ann Collier
Emily and Geoffrey Seger
Dale and Alice Valaskovic

\$1,000 - \$4,999

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Bonnie and Jim Barr	Charles E. McLure Jr.
Frank and Sally Baumann	Brenda and Mark Mehos
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Gail Cavinee and David Doering	Kip and Janice Nickel
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Adel Korkor	Roberta Amy Woodward
Carleen Layman and Evan Wenger	

Board Leadership 2021

Many of our Board Members are drawn from churches with long-time ties to Mar Elias Educational Institutions and Pilgrims of Ibillin while others are individuals who have traveled with our Living Stones Pilgrimages. A few came to us through friendship with Abuna Elias Chacour, the founder of the Mar Elias Educational Institutions, or years of commitment to education for a just peace in Israel and Palestine.

Rev. Dr. Peter Henry, President

Pastor, Davidson College Presbyterian Church

Kip Nickel, Treasurer

Strategy Consultant, Horizon Partners, Inc.

Rev. Dr. Lucy Forster-Smith, Vice President

Presbyterian clergy and campus minister

Sarah Morgan, Secretary

Leader of software quality assurance team, Epic Systems

Rev. Anne Weirich

Retired Presbyterian Clergy

Rev. Bobby Morris

Pastor Mt. Pilgrim Lutheran Church and Adjunct Professor, Jerusalem Center for Biblical Studies

Dr. Brenda Mehos

Retired Hospital Pharmacist and Interim Exec. Director for Pilgrims of Ibillin

Rev. Don Brown

Designated Transitional Minister, Jerusalem Western Salisbury Church

Rev. Gail Doering

Presbyterian Clergy

Haifa Bautista, Ed.D

Early Childhood Education Consultant

Judy Masserang

Retired Communications Professional, Rotarian

Rev. Dr. James Thomas

Retired Associate Professor of Church and Ministry, Director of African American Ministries Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary

Dr. Lamontte Luker

Academic Dean of the Jerusalem Center for Biblical Studies

Rev. Dr. Mary Sue Dreier

Lutheran (ELCA) Clergy, Professor

Rima Kawas

Regional Director Middle East North Africa Division

Rev. Susan Mozena

Minister of Adult Education, Grosse Pointe Memorial Church

Wren Shealy

ESL Instructor, EF English First