

# **International Center of Bethlehem**

## **Annual Report 1999**

### **Table of Contents**

Mission Statement	
From The General Director	1
History and Facilities	2
The Staff of the International Center	3
Arts and Crafts Program	5
Art Workshops Series	6
Art Workshops for Children	8
Local Artists Network	10
Special Workshops and Exhibitions	12
Interview with an Artist	13
Gift Shop	14
Music Department	17
Mishwar CD and Booklet	18
Christmas Performance	19
Re-integration program	20
Lectures	21
Special Conferences	22
Special Delegations and Visitors	23
YAP program	24
After-school clubs	25
Authentic Tourism	26
Dar al-Kalima	29
International Exchanges	31
Upcoming Projects	33
Facts and Figures	34
Advertisements	35

### **Mission Statement**

The Center is not only concerned with resurrecting buildings, but the Palestinian community as a whole. A commitment to engage the local community to assume a proactive role in shaping their future is at the heart of the Center's work. Through empowering that local community, training future leaders, and developing human resources, the Center actively promotes the building of a civil society in Palestine. As a cultural center, the International Center is committed to strengthening the Palestinian identity, cultivating artistic talent, and facilitating intercultural encounters.

The building that houses the International Center of Bethlehem, constructed originally in 1886 and temporarily used as a shelter for refugees after the 1948 war, was part of The Lutheran School until the mid 1970s. In the late 1980s, plans of renovation were drawn up. German and Palestinian youth worked side

by side and started the reconstruction process. In 1992 the first phase was completed with the opening of the Abu Jubran guest house. In 1995 the second phase was completed with the inauguration of the International Center of Bethlehem.

Prior to its renovation, the building that the International Center of Bethlehem occupies symbolized the hopelessness and despair felt by many Palestinians during the Israeli occupation. The renovation not only resurrected an old abandoned building, it transformed the building into a sign of hope for a future Palestine.

We have named our center Dar al-Nadwa, literally meaning the house of worldwide encounter. We have chosen this name deliberately because we believe in the necessity of dialogue between cultures and encounter between people from different contexts. Since its opening, the Center has provided services for more than 20,000 people annually, both local and international.

The years following the founding of the center have witnessed a further transformation of the scope of the center's work and the scale of its facilities. Originally begun with a staff of only two, in 1999 the staff grew to over ten members. Furthermore, 1999 was a landmark year in terms of construction – new offices were opened, The Cave (an art gallery and gift shop – see page 14) was inaugurated, and artists began work in the newly completed art workshops. True to the spirit of the original founding of the center, these expansions have transformed old, unused and dilapidated buildings into beautiful and functional facilities that tell a story of successful integration between tradition and modernity. The growth of our center empowers it to better meet the diverse needs of the ever-increasing number of visitors to our center.

The highlights of the center's facilities include:

16. Two lecture rooms with audio-visual equipment
17. "The cave" for informal meetings in a relaxed atmosphere
18. Gift shop, including an art gallery
19. Dining room
20. Church for meditation and Sunday services.

**Rana Khoury**, a native of Bethlehem, graduated from the University of Michigan with an M.A. in Modern Middle Eastern and North African Studies, and works as the Deputy General Director of the Center. "The International Center is where I have witnessed rays of hope in the darkness of despair, seen the promising future of Palestine, and observed hard work with unfailing will and mission."

**Christian Schoenhofen**, from Bonn, Germany, is doing alternative civil service with the ICB before starting his studies in International Relations in October 2000 in Dresden. "Working here fits in the context of my planned studies because I can learn about the challenges and opportunities associated with working in an intercultural and international environment."

**Andreas F. Kuntz** from the Palatinate in southwest Germany, is coordinator for Authentic Tourism, involved in program development and guide training while studying Cultural Tourism Management at Gesamthochschule Hagen. "Pioneer situations have two sides like a coin: always dealing with obstacles and always feeling the thrill of the new - that's the challenge for me in Bethlehem 2000 C.E."

**Nuha Khoury**, a native of Bethlehem who received a Ph.D. in Islamic History from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, has been back in Palestine since 1996 working as the Coordinator for the Dar al-Kalima project. "The Center is an innovative and visionary institution – I believe that its strength lies in the fact that it is a work in progress responding to the numerous needs of Palestinian society and working towards a better future for the whole community."

**Faten Nastas** is a Palestinian artist from Bethlehem who received her BFA from Bezalel Academy of Fine Art and Design. "Working at the ICB is an adventure in which one encounters many surprises, many obstacles, and lots of fun – occasionally one may run out of fuel, but one is always gaining experience while becoming culturally and intellectually enriched, just like life in Palestine."

**Johannes Zang**, from Aschaffenburg in Bavaria, Germany, received a degree in Music Therapy from the University for Music and Arts in Vienna, after which he worked for several years as a music therapist in Bavaria. "The ICB is like a small world where people from different nations, ages, religions, etc., encounter and get to know each other – that is the first step to peace."

**Daoud Nassar**, with a bachelor's degree in Business Administration and a one-year degree in Tourism Management, has been working since 1991 with the Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church and the International Youth Exchange since 1995 at the International Center of Bethlehem in the field of Tourism and Intercultural Youth Exchange. "Young people are the foundation for a better future."

**Jihan Nassar**, a native of Beit Sahour, a small town near Bethlehem, graduated from the University of Cincinnati with a B.A. in Computer Science, and works as the Communication Specialist of the ICB since 1996. "Although the nature of my job primarily involved work with computer hardware and software, I still had the chance to meet and work with people from different cultural backgrounds,

which I think is important in developing a better understanding of one's context."

**Craig Hunter**, from Florida in the United States, is working for the center for a year through the Presbyterian Church (USA) while working on a Masters of Divinity from Princeton Theological Seminary. "The center is really representative of Bethlehem – rooted in the Palestinian community and culture, yet hosting the world."

**Jan-Peter Hempel**, from Schleswig in the north of Germany, finished an apprenticeship in carpentry and fine art studies in painting at the University of Dresden, after which he came to the ICB in August of 1998, where he serves as an art-coordinator. "The teamwork among the staff, who focus on details of a project without neglecting the important human relationships, has been educational and rewarding for me."

**Abeer Eweis** graduated from Bethlehem University with a diploma in Hotel Management and works at the ICB as a receptionist. "One of the most important elements of the ICB is the team spirit, which unites the employees and causes them to give the best they have."

Thirty years of Israeli occupation, the daily struggle for one's bread, and the existence of a rigid educational system focused on memorization have all suppressed cultural creativity among Palestinians. The **Arts and Crafts program** aims to address this problem by reviving the local community's sense of beauty and strengthening Palestinian identity by cultivating local artistic talents.

The Arts and Crafts program recognizes that a culture is made up of much more than its language and infrastructure. Rather, much of what makes up a culture cannot be seen, it is alive in the spirit of the people and in their outlook on life. The rebirth of Palestinian society thus involves both a spiritual and a "practical" component – it involves changing both the world in which Palestinians live as well as the perspective from which they look at that world.

Neither is complete without the other -- a reborn Palestinian society with brand new streets, improved living conditions, and hordes of investment, but without a rebirth of the spirit, a rebirth of dignity arising from pride in one's past and

enthusiasm for the future, is not a resurrected Palestinian society at all.

Art, by representing different ways of looking at the world, both reflects and influences the spirit of a society. Art may not be the only vehicle for the rebirth of the spirit, but it certainly has the potential to be an important and unique one. We therefore have sought to take advantage of our international connections as well as the gifts of our art coordinators to create an arts and crafts program that will hopefully leave a permanent mark on Palestinian society.

Eager to follow on the success of the first Stained glass workshop held at the International Center of Bethlehem (ICB) in the autumn of 1998, the center hosted a second Stained glass workshop between September 13 and October 9 of 1999. Enthused participants from a variety of different towns were eager to take advantage of the opportunity to learn how to produce art in what is for Palestine a rare medium – stained glass. The leaders of the workshop, Hayat Yasser and Aissa Sahuriyyeh, had been trained by the visiting American artist Corinne Whitlach at the workshop the year before.

During the period between the two workshops, they had practiced and developed their talent so that they were qualified to pass on their knowledge and experience to another group of people, hoping to create a new group of stained glass artisans. The participants came from different places: Bethlehem, Beit-Sahour, Beit-Jala, Hebron and Ramallah. They all came from different backgrounds and represented a wide range of careers, including those of electrician, calligrapher, glass blower, and housewife.

The main goals of this workshop were:

1. Qualifying new stained glass artisans, guaranteeing the continuity of the first stained glass workshop
2. Creating new job opportunities for the participants, or at least new artistic horizons for those that already produce art in other media.
1. Recycling, using colored bottles and wasted Hebron glass, for the sake of a better environment.

While this workshop was unique, it nevertheless illustrates some of the goals of the workshops in general. In addition to supporting creativity among the Palestinians, the various workshops of the arts and crafts program aim to provide job opportunities for some of the locals in a society that struggles with

high unemployment, to preserve

Palestinian tradition that was suppressed under the Israeli occupation, and to improve the quality and variety of art in Palestine. Each year the center holds several workshops in a variety of different art forms, hosted both by the center's art directors and other local and international artists. These workshops are open to the public and are targeted to both adults and children. Another example of a workshop was the tempura color workshop, supervised by the German artist Jan Peter Hempel and the Palestinian Artist Samar Ghattas. Heidrun Storz also conducted a workshop in which the participants learned how to paint on ceramics. Much of their work was later displayed for sale in the Cave giftshop, and several of them have continued making art in this medium. Many more such workshops are planned in the future in fields such as glass-blowing, weaving, etc.

Palestinian children were exposed to a lot of violence and fear during many years of Israeli occupation and the Palestinian Intifada. Furthermore, they suffer from a school system which depends on memorization and lacks innovation. Moreover, the children do not have many options for after-school activities and thus they generally spend their time either watching TV or playing in the streets.

Our belief is that Palestine will not have any future unless this situation is challenged and changed. Since the children of today are the leaders of the tomorrow, they demand special attention. Given that art is one of the most effective tools within the hand of the human culture, the ICB has a special interest in art activities for children.

The founding of the Art-Workshops program for children at the International Center of Bethlehem aims at:

1. Developing the artistic, creative, aesthetic, and physical potential of the children

1. Introducing the children to self-based learning, which enables them to discover their creative strengths, talents, and interests.

1. Opening up the children to express their thoughts and feelings in various ways.

1. Showing the children different alternatives that they have when planning their future professional lives.

1. Promoting the children's self-confidence by acknowledging their work.

1. Contributing to the individual development of each child.

One unique children's workshop hosted by the International Center was led by the Dutch artist Katja Stienen. During the first two weeks of July, she led a bubbly and energetic group of nine children and one adult in a workshop about landscape art. She pointed out that in order to really see a landscape, you first have to know how to look and to realize that looking is not without thinking or knowing. Thus the workshop began with questions such as, What is a landscape? What does it look like? Where do you find it? What can you find in it? What does it need to survive? What can you do with it, use it for?

With these questions in mind, the children could freely draw the landscape of their choice. They were later taught various other techniques, such as how to use perspective, how to draw a panorama, how to use shades of light and to mix various colors to make new colors, etc. At the end of the workshop, the group went to the Israel Museum in Jerusalem to see the paintings there. Finally, the children painted more landscapes as well as other kinds of paintings, which were later exhibited in the center.

The concern of many Palestinians for meeting daily needs doesn't promote the awareness of art, or allow much time for people to dedicate to it. In addition, Israeli persecution disconnected Palestinians from what was occurring in the rest of the world, particularly in cultural and artistic fields. As a result, many Palestinian artists, some of whom had their art works confiscated by the Israelis, withdrew from the art world and stopped exhibiting their art and ideas.

Fortunately, however, after the withdrawal of the Israelis from the Palestinian territories, Palestinian artists started to gather and revive their activities in places like Ramallah and Al-Wasity in Jerusalem. Nothing similar took place among the artists of the Bethlehem District until the Vision group was founded by the ICB in February 1999. This network is necessary for building a forum for local artists and art lovers where they can discuss issues concerning art as well as express themselves creatively. Participating artists practice such diverse forms of art as painting, sculpturing, iconography, graphic design, calligraphy, and stained glass. The Vision group also provides a forum where the artists can get to know each other, discuss art matters, engage in joint projects and activities, and simply have fun together.

The Vision group celebrated its inaugural exhibition from May 6 to June 6, 1999. Fifteen local artists displayed very diverse forms of art in an exhibition that led to deeper bonds among the group members. Two of these artists, Rania Andon and Samar Ghattas, later participated in the **Urbino exhibition** in Italy. Entitled URBINO: EXPRESSIONS OF YOUTH, this international exhibition featured artists from four different continents representing over ten different countries. Held in the prestigious Rampa di Francesco di Giorgio Martini, in Urbino, Italy, between September 12 and October 10, the exhibition explored what culturally diverse young artists can add to a modern understanding and experience of contemporary art. The exhibition was a great success for our

artists, one of whom is now studying art in Italy.

To give a face to this Vision group, we would like to highlight a few of the artists who are part of the group.

Mr. **Johnny Andonia** is a Bethlehem iconographer who was formerly a waiter in a Bethlehem hotel. During the Gulf War, business in the hotel was slow, so with the help of one of his friends, a monk from Mar Saba monastery, he began painting icons. His talent continued to develop during a trip to Cyprus for six months where he took a course in iconography. He is now the most outstanding iconographer in Palestine, specializing in wall icons for churches. He contributed to the painting of the Shepherds' Field Church in Beit Sahour, the Church of the Prophet Elijah in Jericho, and the Church of the Arch-Angel Michael in Mar-Sabba.

Mr. **Jabra Mitwasi** is a young calligrapher and graphic designer from Beit-Jala. While studying for his B.S. in accounting at Bethlehem University, he attended arts and crafts courses and developed his Arabic calligraphy skills. He is currently working as a financial manager of housing projects and as a graphic designer specializing in making signs. In addition to his work, he always finds the time to maintain his art and calligraphy skills by creating art and participating in art exhibitions.

Each year, the International Center hosts some special workshops and participates in a number of unique exhibitions. In 1999, the center participated with the Ministry of Culture in an exhibition for Heritage Day in Deheisheh Refugee camp and another exhibition of women's products in Ramallah. Participation in these events spreads the center's work to a larger audience and a wider surrounding, thus giving people an opportunity to see art that they may not otherwise see.

The International Center, true to its name, also shows its work internationally as it did at the beginning of this past year in Turku, Finland. The center played a central role in organizing and collecting the materials for the exhibition, the subject of which was Christmas in Bethlehem.

One of the unique workshops we had this last year was a poetry performance workshop held in June under the supervision of Leah Thorn, a British performance poet, at the International Center of Bethlehem. Leah performed some of her poems to an enthusiastic audience consisting of local Palestinian women. The positive reception of Leah's poetry brought the participants back for the second day of the workshop, during which they took part in four exercises in Arabic, made possible with translation. The last exercise was a joint one in which all the participants wrote something, which was then compiled and read as one poem. Two of the participants volunteered to edit the text to make



it more seamless and to send the translation to Leah. The workshop was such a success that Leah announced her wish to come again and lead more meetings.

We interviewed one of the artists from the Vision Group, Aissa Mousa Sahuriyyeh, as an example of how the International Center has helped to empower some of the local artists. Aissa, 28 years old, originally from Jerusalem, lives in Beit Safafa and frequently comes to the center to work.

*How did you get involved with the Center?*

From Faten [one of the art coordinators]. I became involved in October of 98 when I took a stained glass course from Corinne Whitlach. Ever since then, I have been working at the International Center and taking part in many of their workshops.

*What kind of art do you like to do?*

I like stained glass, especially windows. I love it when the sun shines through my art. Other people can easily appreciate its beauty, so it makes me feel good when other people come to visit our studio and see my art.

*What did you do before you got involved with your art and the International Center?*

I studied theology for a year and then I left. Then I was unemployed for a while.

*How much time does it take you to make a stained glass piece?*

It varies. Some of them take only a few hours, many of them can take up to two weeks.

*What do you enjoy about the Vision Artists Group?*

It is nice to exchange ideas with the other artists in the group as well as to visit exhibitions from local and foreign artists to get new inspiration. I also enjoy just doing things together.

*How does living in Bethlehem impact your art?*

Most of my inspiration comes from Bethlehem and the people and the buildings. People that come here need something from the Holy Land, from the life of the people, and from the buildings. I make nativity scenes and stars and old

windows and old doors, and people like this.

*What so you want to do in the future?*

I want to continue working with glass, and to learn to do other things with it, such as glass-blowing. I would also like to visit other places and to learn how they make art elsewhere.

As part of its mission to reinvigorate Palestinian culture, the International Center of Bethlehem hopes to join in the project to revive the Old City of Bethlehem. With the support of international donors, the Old City of Bethlehem has received a facelift, with new paving on the streets, several new buildings, and a friendly atmosphere that encourages visitors to wander the streets and become more deeply acquainted with the people and places of Bethlehem. The International Center of Bethlehem is contributing to this process with the establishment of the Arts and Crafts Center. The modern, spacious gift shop focusing on art pieces plans to set a new standard for gift shops in the Old City.

You are cordially invited to join me, Jan-Peter Hempel, the Art Coordinator at the International Center of Bethlehem, on a tour of the Arts and Crafts Center, which joyfully opened on the 9<sup>th</sup> of December 1999 . . .

Welcome to the gift shop 'The Cave'!

In search of real Palestinian art rather than the kitsch commonly available elsewhere, 'The Cave' offers a selection of high quality Palestinian art that is unique among Bethlehem art shops, including well-known traditional Palestinian olivewood, mother of pearl carvings, ceramics, blown glass, and pieces of jewelry, all made by local artists and workshops.

Next to the gift shop, the creative power that slumbers in the people of Palestine comes out in our new arts & crafts workshops. Many Palestinians, especially housewives and formerly unemployed young people, find new perspectives in producing their personal art works in our ateliers and in marketing them in the gift shop.

The center also contributes to the art scene in Bethlehem by opening art exhibitions of Palestinian and international artists and institutions in our art gallery. Some of the artists, whose works are shown in the arts & crafts gallery and gift shop, stay as artists in residence at the center, producing new art works, giving art lectures and workshops for local people.

The gallery thus plays an important role in promoting art as an important cultural activity in a civilized society. Gallery talks are always provided, especially to children.

We were happy to host the painter Ms. Riikka Juvonen from Helsinki, Finland in

December 1999.

Take a glass of wine and join  
one of our very special  
opening events !  
Be there and join a personal  
gallery talk and share new  
ideas with a famous artist in our gallery!

In conclusion of our round through the Arts & Crafts Center, absorb the atmosphere in the cave where people lived 2000 years ago . . . or enjoy a hot cup of coffee in the 200 year old water cistern with a beautiful wall painting, which I did as the artist in residence at the center three years ago.

Johannes Zang, the International Center's Music Coordinator and a new addition to the staff, writes, "One day when I was jogging last autumn, I saw a Japanese woman, standing on the street, who appeared to be waiting for a taxi. What immediately came to my mind was: the Japanese like music . . . they are very polite and reliable people . . . exactly what I need for my choir! So I stopped and talked to her and invited her to my choir.

I discovered her name is Rika and she has been in the West-Bank for 5 years working as a nurse in the Hebron district. And indeed, she has been one of the most stalwart members of the choir, almost never missing a rehearsal. If she has to miss a rehearsal, she tells me ahead of time-- she is more German than I am! Furthermore, Rika enriches our once-in-a-while-choir-parties by providing great and delicious Japanese food. We have sung in Arabic, English, Latin, German, Spanish, but not yet in Japanese. But hopefully soon."

Rika is a good example of both the international composition of the International Center's choir as well as the fun-loving spirit in which the music program takes place. The center created the music program to offer some entertainment (with workshops, concerts, and music-festivals) for youngsters and adults in Bethlehem. Bethlehem has no cinemas or theatres or activity clubs where young adults can gather socially, thus the music program of the center provides a unique opportunity. Those with musical gifts are encouraged to develop them and those who merely enjoy the atmosphere are also welcome. The core of the music program is the choir, "Nijmet Betlahim" (Star of Bethlehem), founded in October. It now consists of Palestinians, Germans, Swiss, and Japanese, who live, work, or volunteer in Bethlehem or Jerusalem. They are presented with other styles of music to which they might not ordinarily have exposure, like certain kinds of church music, Baroque music, South American music, et cetera.

The music program also supports Ihya' Baladna, a youth dabke group that preserves traditional Palestinian culture through its dancing. Consisting of 38 members, the group practices three times a week for upcoming performances, scheduled to begin in June of 2000 in Bethlehem and in France. The group

knows 8 dances and has 144 different dresses that come from all over Palestine, including the north and the south. In between their dances, they speak about all the different cultures and customs of Palestine, infecting the audience with their love of Palestinian culture.

Finally, the 1999 program also included a guitar workshop that was well received – there are people here who would like to learn "western" instruments and "western" music, but cannot afford to attend a local private music-academy. This workshop will continue in 2000 at the next level. Also planned in 2000 is a jazz-workshop for beginners and a week in autumn where Western and Oriental music will meet and create something new. In the future, Johannes also has plans to encourage the locals to practice their own Palestinian music and even to compose in this style.

### **Mishwar – A Musical Pilgrimage Through Palestine**

In 1999, the International Center of Bethlehem produced a CD and accompanying book that conveys the resilience of the Palestinian people who suffer under Israeli oppression. The music on the CD is conceived as a pilgrimage that takes the listener through a variety of songs that highlight the theme of freedom and resistance. Both traditional Arabic songs and Western-style songs are featured, giving the listener an experience of the musical melting pot that characterizes modern Arabic music. The International Center is very proud of this project and hopes that while giving listeners a pleasant musical experience, it will also raise awareness of Palestinian concerns and allow others to share some of their pain and courage.

### **Christmas Performance**

The highlight of the newborn music department in 1999 was the choir performance during the Christmas Eve service in the Christmas Lutheran Church which was broadcast throughout Germany, Austria, and Switzerland by a German television channel. The new director's primary task upon arriving was to train the choir for this performance. Johannes Zang envisioned a more lively choir than usual: "Christmas-services are often very silent . . . many of the normal hymns are very solemn and "official". I wanted my choir to express the Christmas joy!" He also wanted a diverse selection of hymns from the three languages in which the service is traditionally held: Arabic, English, and German. "It was not easy to choose the songs. We soon had the German and the English songs, but to find a real Palestinian local Christmas song was not easy. The suggested ones were either from other Arab countries or translations of originally German or English Christmas carols. At last we found LEILA TEL MILAD which was a very good choice. But there was a difference of opinion among the locals about the spelling and pronunciation of some words, and I finally had to say CHALAS: Let's sing it this way!"

The service was a triumph. Johannes, the director, unexpectedly painted a SMILE on both palms of his hands, so when he opened his hands and began to conduct, the whole choir was so surprised that they immediately began smiling and continued to do so throughout the entire service. The service reached a wide audience in Germany, and many wrote letters of congratulations. The choir had a party a few weeks later to celebrate their performance, their sentiments echoing those of their director: "Everything worked out perfectly! No mistake! No confusion! Great. I was 150% happy and content!"

Whether it was magic or fashion, theater or debate, the year 1999 was alive with energy and excitement for members of the Graduates Club. The Graduates Club, created in 1996, is part of the Reintegration program, and consists of members who have graduated from international universities and have returned in the last few years to Palestine. The aim is to facilitate their reintegration, mainly on the social level, through cultural activities. Last year was special for the Graduates Club in terms of having many of its members, mainly graduates of international universities, featured in the biweekly meetings of the Club. While past years have focused on presentations by non-members, last year provided a forum for the members of the club to share and develop their interests. These interests ranged across a wide variety of topics, much as one would expect among such a talented and diverse group of young people. The group listened to lectures by local experts on topics such as Israeli elections, Palestinian theater, and Israeli settlements, and gender relationships in Palestinian society. The group also entertained themselves by watching films, seeing performances (such as those of a poet and a local magician), and watching the Dabkeh dancing group. Part of the Graduates Club, the Dabkeh group dances in a traditional Palestinian style to local music, especially for international groups, the majority of which come through the Authentic Tourism program.

Perhaps the highlight of the year was a fashion show exhibiting the works of three fashion designers from the Bethlehem area, part of the effort to celebrate the talent of the members of the Graduates Club as well as other local talents. Several designs were displayed which creatively blended Western dress with the traditional Middle Eastern style. Both the curator and the models were members of the Graduates Club as well. The high turnout for this event, with over a hundred people in attendance, testified to the success of the event.

While the center receives many groups from Denmark every year, the group of 40 people that arrived last November with UNITAS was unique – they were deaf. Always eager to provide our services to as many people as possible, the center was pleased to make arrangements so that the group could understand the lecture given by Dr. Nuha Khoury. Her English words were directly translated and typed in Danish on a laptop computer. They were then projected onto a huge wall-screen so that the audience could follow Nuha's explanations.. The occasion allowed the center to provide the group with accurate information

about Palestine but also, once again, to prove the Center's reputation as an institution which leads Palestine into the 21<sup>st</sup> century by using modern technology to promote culture and history.

Although that day in autumn was unique, lectures at the International Center of Bethlehem are frequent. The lecture program gives people from all over the world the opportunity to know what life in Bethlehem is like. Groups from Germany, the United States, Norway, Sweden, and Finland, are particularly well represented.

The tourists and pilgrims coming here often lack information about the current situation of the people, but are open to receive accurate and in-depth information provided by the lecturers of the ICB. Their lectures promote an awareness of Palestinian heritage, culture, and contemporary life by providing information about not only Palestine but also about Palestinians. The increased awareness of the tourists that this creates, combined with the lasting impression arising from what they see afterwards on the streets of Bethlehem with more open eyes, is the best way to bring the Palestinians to international acknowledgement, a crucial element in the state building process.

Christian Schoenhofen, Coordinator for the Lecture Program, gives an example of the effects of these lectures: "I attended one of Daoud Nassar's lectures last summer for a German youth group. I think the most impressive moment was when he talked about the checkpoint, permits, etc. in terms of his own personal experience. He even passed his permit around . . . how many 18-year-old German girls have ever had the opportunity to look at a Palestinian ID?"

The focus of the lectures is often on the special situation of the Christians as a minority in Palestine. The vast majority of tourists come to Bethlehem from Western, Christian cultures and, if they are even aware of the existence of Palestinian Christians, are generally not acquainted with the issues that the local Christians face. Our lecturers share with them the struggles inherent in the Palestinian context, struggles which include questions such as "What issues arise from dialogue with the surrounding Muslim society? How is the church addressing continued Christian emigration? How does one read the Old Testament when it has been used as a basis for oppression?" Through this insight into the struggles of the people here, the image of a timeless, romanticized Bethlehem is given a very real face.

Is Advent a part of colonial history in Southern Africa?

How much are the Christian feasts influenced by the market?

What does it mean to celebrate the joy of Easter in the context of Israeli

oppression?

What can the entire church learn from the African celebration of Thanksgiving?

These are just a few of the questions that were raised at a recent theological

conference held at the International Center of Bethlehem in cooperation with the Swedish Theological Institute, entitled *The Feasts From a Cross-Cultural Perspective*. At the invitation of Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb, an ethnically diverse group of seminarians, pastors, and theology students from the Swedish Theological Institute in Jerusalem agreed to participate in a conference led by Dr. Raheb at the center. He began the conference with the statement, "The real challenge is not developing a contextual theology, but developing a contextual liturgy." The participants then proceeded to examine the Christian feasts of Advent, Christmas, Easter, and Thanksgiving from a liturgical perspective. The hope was that learning about the celebration of the feasts in other contexts would result in a broader understanding of the feasts in one's own context. The conference was blessed to have participants from such diverse countries as Botswana, Norway, Zambia, Finland, Palestine, Swaziland, Denmark, the United States, and Mozambique, to name a few. As they examined each feast in turn, the participants shared how it was celebrated in their own context. Both many similarities (such as the presence of a Christmas tree in all cultures) and many differences (the central importance of Thanksgiving in the African context as opposed to its minor role in the Scandinavian context) came to the surface. These comparisons provided fertile ground for many questions, including those mentioned above. Not all of the questions were answered, but everyone in the group walked away with a deeper appreciation of the meaning of the feasts and the varieties of their celebration. Furthermore, the discussion allowed the members of the group to understand more fully the struggles of the church in each context - the feasts reflect the societies in which they are celebrated. Thus the struggle within the African context to find what is valuable both from the missionaries and from the native culture, the struggle of the Scandinavian churches to reach out to those without families during feasts that have traditionally focused on the family, and the struggle of the Palestinian church to reflect the hope incarnate in Christmas during times of great struggle are a few of the examples.

Having raised such questions and heard the stories of the participants, the last

portion of the conference was spent putting the theory into practice, creating

the liturgy for a service in which everyone participated. The participants split

into various groups to plan the service. The ideas of these groups were then

integrated into a service drawing from a number of traditions which culminated

in the sharing of the Lord's Supper.



The International Center was privileged to be able to host such a conference and contribute to cross-cultural understanding. In its role as a place of international encounter, the center has several special conferences every year, all of which are unique. We look forward to opportunities to host similar conferences in the future, which we hope will be as successful.

1999 was a prestigious year for the International Center of Bethlehem as notable dignitaries from all over the world visited the center. The Archbishop of Trier (Germany), the Mayor of Cologne, and the Finnish President were merely a few among those that gathered in the center for various receptions throughout the year. A particularly proud moment for the center occurred in October when President Ahtisaari of Finland laid the cornerstone for the Dar Al-Kalima Conference Center at Madbassa Square. The presence of several other notable dignitaries, including Mrs. Suha Arafat, Dr. Emil Jarju'y (Member of the PLO Executive Committee and Legislative Council Member) who represented President Yasser Arafat, Dr. Nabil Kassis (Minister for the Bethlehem 2000 project), and Mr. Muhammad Rashid al-Ja'bari (Governor of Bethlehem) added to the prestige of the moment. Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb thanked the Finnish government for their \$2.5 million support of the project while sharing with them the vision of the new academy. The Finnish President shared his hopes that the Dar al-Kalima Academy would help to expedite the peace process and facilitate dialogue between different cultures and religions by serving as a cultural beacon in the future democratic state of Palestine. Both speeches thus gave the center important publicity and recognition among the community.

Another example of the important role the International Center plays in coordinating important events occurred during the visit of the Archbishop of Milan. The Archbishop of Milan, the head of the largest diocese in the world and a possible future candidate for pope, requested an ecumenical gathering among the leaders of the different churches. The International Center, acting on his behalf, thus arranged a meeting attended by several local heads of churches. Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb spoke on behalf of the center, after which the other church leaders gave speeches to the 1,000+ people in attendance. The International Center was once again proud to be able to serve as a vehicle to bring different international leaders together for an enriching encounter.

Observing the situation of young people in Palestine and Israel, the Christian Council in Sweden and its expert group on Human Rights, in cooperation with the Diocese of Lund -Church of Sweden, thought that they could play a role in supporting human rights issues in this region. They therefore initiated the Youth Action Project on Human Rights for the purpose of building friendships between Christian, Muslim, and Jewish youth in Palestine and Israel, Norway and Sweden while learning about the situation in the Middle East and acting for human rights, peace and reconciliation in Israel/Palestine.

Begun in 1998, the project continued in Bethlehem in April of 1999 when a group consisting of youth, seminary students, and ministers, visited Palestine and the Occupied Territories on an educational tour. The visit, led by the International Center of Bethlehem, which is the coordinator of the YAP Palestine program, allowed the participants to continue building relationships while



studying and human rights violations by both the Israelis and the Palestinians in the context in which they occur. They gained a deeper appreciation of the complexity of the peace process while seeing some of the impediments to such a process in the form of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

The program continued later in the year as representatives from the several participating Palestinian institutions (Al-Liqa' center, International Center of Bethlehem, Rapprochement Center of All People, Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center, Wi'am Palestinian Conflict Resolution Center), visited Sweden. The visit was very educational for all involved, as the Palestinian participants learned about human rights violations in Europe and problems associated with neo-Nazi groups, and as the Swedes learned more about injustices in the Israeli-Palestinian context. The Palestinians visited a mosque, a variety of schools, churches, and members of the media as they spoke with multiple segments of society, allowing the Swedes to get a more accurate and in-depth representation of the situation than they would otherwise get in the media.

Meanwhile, a series of workshops were held in Palestine to help the Palestinian youth learn more about their rights. These workshops covered issues such as the International Declaration of Human Rights, International Law, and an Introduction to Democracy and Human Rights. A field trip to Jerusalem to allow the youth to visit the settlements and demolished houses unfortunately had to be postponed because of the closure of Jerusalem.

The International Center and other members of the YAP program look forward to August 2000, when all the local and foreign participants will gather in Bethlehem for the International Christian Youth Festival. They plan to take advantage of that opportunity to meet youth from all over the world and present the idea of the YAP program. We hope that spreading awareness about human rights violations should help to prevent them in the future.

This year, the Evangelical Lutheran School of Bethlehem embarked upon a unique and groundbreaking project to address some of the problems faced by the Palestinian educational system. School has traditionally ended in the early afternoon, after which time the children have no structured activities. Given the lack of playgrounds, open areas, or other constructive after-school activities, the children often spend their time playing on the streets. The school system also faces other problems in that much of the learning techniques rely on rote memorization or other uninspiring methods.

Seeking to address these needs, the Lutheran School thus began an after-school program for the students. This program sought to keep the children off

the streets while engaging them in fun and creative learning activities. Each afternoon of the week, the students had a different subject for their club. The subjects covered such a wide variety as Computers, German, Art, Science, English, Music, etc. Believing that the students would be more enthusiastic when given the chance to pursue their interests, they were given a range of choices as to which clubs they could participate in.

The International Center of Bethlehem, by virtue of its close relationship with the Lutheran School and its interest in the revival of Palestinian society through education, was closely involved with the after-school program. Five members of the center's staff spent several hours a week in the afternoon teaching at the school. The disciplinary situation was often difficult and positive results were frequently not immediately apparent, but nevertheless both the slow improvement of the students' abilities as well as the warmth with which they grew to greet the teachers suggested that the program has met with some success. The Lutheran School and the International Center look forward to building on that success in the future.

One of the teachers at the school, Christian Schoenhofen, describes his experience as a teacher at the school as follows: "Teaching in the School is an every-day challenge. When I think back to the first German lessons, I still can hardly believe that it worked, me being a teacher. I have to cope with the pupils who have no space around them to play and to let out their emotions and aggressions. Therefore I am obliged to invent games, attractive exercises which fit into the innovative program of the school while teaching them the German language. The lessons are always on the edge between chaos and innovation. This has meant a lot of creativity, sometimes a lot of screaming and frustration. But I am glad to have the opportunity to organize the lessons. If sometimes the pupils are really concentrated on a game and eager to learn what I teach them, then I know how satisfying and fascinating this job can be!"

Many groups from very different parts of the world were hosted by the International Center. In addition to the Nordic countries, a German-speaking visitors were again a frequent guests of the Center. More and more people are interested in experiencing the Palestinian situation using new ways away from the trodden path of the big travel business.

"In all the years that we have come to Israel, we have never experienced such a competent team. We must thank you very heartily for precisely and comprehensively informing us of the connection between the historic past and the present. In the future we will recommend only your institution/organization as far as study tours to Israel and Palestine are concerned. We realize that usual travel agencies do not offer an accurate view of how the peace process looks in the lives of the people – previous guides have been disappointing. Here, I think, you have an advantage, which you should use urgently," Mr. Hans Stenzel of the Kirchenkreis Jülich (Rhineland/Westphalia), department for society and education, stated after his visit in November.

The Authentic Tourism program, begun in 1995, aims at developing encounters with the fifth gospel, the holy places in Palestine, where God's relationship with

humanity crystallized. What makes our program unique, however, is what elicited such praise above – our stress on encountering the people of Palestine and their situation. The sixth gospel, as Palestinian theologians name it, needs more than a typical pilgrimage itinerary -- it needs new programs and educated hosts and guides.

In 1995, the project proposal of the International Center stated the aims of the Intensive Course: 1. To train Palestinian guides to provide tourists coming to the Holy Land with a comprehensive picture of the entire country. 2. To empower Palestinians to become a voice for the voiceless, thus creating among tourists and pilgrims an awareness and understanding of the issues of peace and justice. 3. To introduce and promote the idea of a woman guide into the Palestinian tourism sector, thus influencing Palestinian society to become more gender-sensitive. This goal has already borne fruit – almost 50% of licensed female Palestinian tour guides have been trained by the ICB. 4. To economically empower women by training and equipping

them with necessary skills to enable them to find jobs. With this goal in mind, over half of the guides trained by the ICB are women. 5. To introduce a new approach to guiding which is socially responsible by emphasizing three categories, namely: (a) visiting the West Bank, especially sites that have thus far been neglected, (b) giving a face to the land through encounters with the "living stones" of the local church and Palestinian society and (c) introducing visitors to the social and cultural realities of life in Palestine.

We had to face a few challenges in pursuing these aims. Most of our students have to work in addition to studying in order to provide for their families. 50% of the students have no job or have temporary employment, not a surprising fact, since this number mirrors the situation in the entire West Bank. We continue to look for scholarships and funding to help students with these economic challenges.

Nevertheless, the students have triumphed over these difficulties. New content, techniques, and approaches to learning that have required the students to make many adjustments have been met with optimism: "It is never too late to learn something new." This attitude reflects the situation of a country whose tradition in guiding pilgrims was interrupted for over 30 years and a country that is developing new forms of education and communication. "We have never had a chance to learn this," is a typical sentence that reflects the increased consciousness of the students and their hunger for knowledge.

The graduates of the Authentic Tourism had the opportunity in 1999 to share what they learned with a growing group of foreigners interested in experiencing the Palestinian situation more closely than media coverage allows, using new ways away from the trodden paths of the big travel industry. The International Center hosted many groups from all over the world, particularly Germany and the Scandinavian countries. Furthermore, with the support of GTZ (Deutsche

Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit GmbH) and on behalf of the Bethlehem 2000 Project, the International Center developed and implemented a Regional-Guide/Palestinian Hostess Course aimed at training mainly women for escort and host duties for delegations and media groups visiting Bethlehem. The 27 graduates of this four-month course, which included a German language course, were used to escort delegations such as the Representative Office of the Federal Republic of Germany during the visit of Bundespräsident Johannes Rau. Another program of the Authentic Tourism department that debuted in November 1999 was the Motivation Seminar. This seminar, designed for German-speaking tour guides in

Palestine, sought to produce tourist guides who: are aware of their key role as international teachers; identify and understand their own prejudices and those of tourists; understand tourists, their cultural background and behavioral patterns; and communicate and interpret to tourists the everyday concerns of the people.

One of 1999's highlights in the Authentic Tourism department that is illustrative of its entire program was the one day visit of the pilgrims from the diocese of Trier, Germany. Many groups took part in the "light of peace", a flame which comes every year from Bethlehem to Frankfurt by plane and is distributed all over Germany by train. The start of this event, which also marked the ecumenical beginning of the German 2000 celebrations, was a service of the German Catholic Bishop's Conference in Bethlehem which received wide media coverage in Germany.

The 200 visitors from Trier, however, headed by Weihbischof Schwarz, decided to spend that day in Bethlehem differently from the other pilgrims and media from Germany. Their program, arranged by the International Center, was an authentic experience hosted by Palestinians which included an introduction to Palestinian Christianity, guided tours of small groups in the old city, and visits to institutions and NGOs in Bethlehem. "My sermon would definitely have been different after that enlightening and moving experience, after the encounter with the local Christians", stated Bishop Schwarz at the end of the day. Once again it was obvious that modern media alone doesn't provide a complete picture -- nothing was mentioned in the German media about the Trier pilgrimage to the "sixth gospel", provided by the International Center.

Finally, 1999 saw the successful pursuit of the "Open Eyes" project with Melitz, a senior Israeli educational institution. This project brought together Israeli and Palestinian professional tour guides to discuss controversial issues in the field of tour guide education. The honest and open interaction allowed each group to learn from the other about implications of various methods of tour guiding. A booklet based on this project which can be used by tour guides, educators, and trainees is due to be published in Spring 2000.

***The Dar al-Kalima Academy***, which aims to equip Palestinians for the 21<sup>st</sup>

century, is coming to life with construction activity taking place on both of its sites on the Madbassa square and the Mureir Mountain. The construction of the conference center at Madbassa square, funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, began in April 1999, and should be completed by the summer of 2000. The construction of the Model School on the Mureir site began in November 28<sup>th</sup> and should be completed at the same time.

Each new wooden beam and slab of concrete brings the *Dar al-Kalima* project closer to the realization of its goal to establish a first-of-its-kind multi-curricular learning facility and cultural center that will broadly develop Palestinian human resources. The Academy will revolutionize education by employing a comprehensive approach to learning composed of five interrelated and dependent components: a *model school (with a primary and secondary school)*, a *vocational school*, an *international forum*, *sports and recreational facilities*, and *cultural enrichment halls and public space*.

Through these facilities, the *Dar al-Kalima* will affect changes in Palestinian society by:

1. creating a new definition of education that includes: vocational training, civil society building, computer and global communication skills, environmental awareness, and education in creativity and creative thinking
2. generating new norms in primary and secondary school curriculum
3. diversifying employment training and employment opportunities
4. contributing to civil society building in Palestine and strengthening Palestinian identity
5. encouraging education for women and possible employment in a culturally appropriate context

Believing that some of the most important education takes place outside of the classroom, part of the *Dar al-Kalima* project includes the creation of a forum where encounters between people from different backgrounds and religious faiths can take place. Locally, the Academy hopes that this atmosphere can be used for a dialogue

that will enhance the peace process and foster humanity's search for justice and peace. On a larger scale, this forum will be an international one, encouraging active communication between Palestine and the rest of the world. Culturally, Palestinians will be able to take advantage of such international exchange through the establishment of a network between educators, musicians, and artists from around the world. The forum also aims to restore to Palestine the place it occupied earlier on the map of theological thought. Its theological role will focus on the revival of old and the development of new theological traditions in the South in general, and in West-Asian countries in particular, using a contextual and cross-cultural approach.

The *Dar al-Kalima* was conceived in 1996 and the ICB began offering programs for the *Academy* in October of 1997. Developed by the director and staff of the International Center of Bethlehem (ICB), the *Dar al-Kalima* aims to build on the success of the five years of programs offered through the ICB to the Bethlehemite community and internationals in addition to the 150-year tradition of educational excellence offered by the Lutheran schools in the Bethlehem area.

For information on how your support can help us realize the vision for the *Dar al-Kalima* project, please see the end of the report.

What do Ghana, France, Italy, and Finland all have in common? These were all locations of some of the international exchanges and conferences members of the International Center participated this past year. These exchanges are integral to the center's work, for they keep the participants abreast of current topics while also providing a forum through which the members of the International Center publicize the center's work and in which important contacts can be made.

The *Mother Mediterranean: People and Cultures* conference brought together people from Southern Europe, Northern Africa, and Western Asia to explore commonalities between the peoples of the Mediterranean. The first meeting of the conference, held in Sommieres in southern France in February, discussed the different contributions of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity with respect to inter-religious dialogue. Other topics included the role of women as cultural mediators, the importance of cultural mediation itself, and issues in immigration, pluralism, and multi-culturalism. The second meeting of the conference, in Tuscany, Italy in November, continued to explore these issues. Following the completion of the conference, Dr. Nuha Khoury stayed in Italy for another week meeting the cardinal of Florence and members of the media, visiting schools, the synagogue of Florence, and introducing the work of the center. Indeed, this public relations work and the formation of contacts that resulted were the most important results of the conference. Contacts were used to send four volunteers to Italy in the summer for a youth work program. We hope to continue this exchange by having Italian volunteers come to the center in the future.

In its role as a partner in inter-religious dialogue, the International Center of Bethlehem has been involved in the last few years in a cross-cultural project concerning Christian Theological Education in Muslim Societies. Although much attention has recently been paid to the contextualization of the Christian witness, the particularities of how this occurs in predominately Muslim societies have often been overlooked. This research project therefore took the participants to different Muslim contexts as they examined the need for indigenous theological education and formulated guidelines to meet that need. The previous few years brought the other international participants to Palestine and took the International Center of Bethlehem's representatives, Dr. Nuha Khoury, Ms. Viola Raheb, and Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb, to the countries of the other members of the team, including Scotland, the United States, and Malaysia. 1999 took the research team to Ghana, giving the International Center of

Bethlehem exposure to a new context. The most valuable part of this exchange was the experience of traditional African culture. Highlights included discussing the injustice of colonialism after visiting a site from which slaves were shipped to the New World, and seeing how family bonds could stay strong despite religious pluralism within the family. The research team will draw from this experience as it finishes a book based on its research in 2000.

The International Center's concern with Women's Issues led to its participation in a conference last July in Turku, Finland entitled, *Our Equal Future*. The meeting was attended by 18 young women, aged between 15 to 25, from Finland, Germany, Palestine, Turkey and England. The International Center's assistance allowed three local women, Amal Taljeh (age 18), Fida' Nustas (age 16) and Faten Nustas (age 24), to attend. The meeting successfully brought together women from different cultures and with varying points of view to discuss women's issues, visit different Finnish institutes and work together on a charity project. In addition to the discussions, the women also visited various work-sites featuring women in prominent issues. Nor was the social aspect of the meeting neglected, as five different cultural nights were held, each featuring a different society. The International Center hopes that providing the opportunity for young women to have such experiences will empower them to become more effective leaders in the future.

Finally, the International Center of Bethlehem was honored to be among the first institutions from MEATRC (Middle East Association for Training and Lay Centers) to be invited to meet with ACISCA (Association of Christian Institutes for Social Concern in Asia). Both associations are under OIKOSNET, a network of regional associations under the World Council of Churches for lay centers engaged in Christian work. The focus of the ACISCA meeting that took place in Chiang Mai, Thailand in October 1999 was "Ecumenical Perspective Beyond 2000 in Asia." The Center's participation in the meeting was particularly significant as a first step in creating a network with similar organizations in Asia. Such a network reflects the ICB's desire for solidarity and information exchange with organizations in developing countries throughout the world.

As an innovative institution, the International Center of Bethlehem is always open to new ideas and eager to undertake new projects. The first step in empowerment is learning to expand the mind and think differently. Our continuing evolution can be seen in some of the new projects we intend for the future.

The Center plans to establish a coffee shop that is managed entirely by women, for the benefit of women. The project is part of the International Center of Bethlehem's attempt to get involved in the development of the Palestinian economy, taking into account the important role that women can play in this development while seeking to meet their employment needs. Therefore, this café will create job opportunities for women and serve as a meeting place for them to relax and enjoy their free time. While the coffee shop will also be open to men, we aim to create a place which will allow women, particularly businesswomen, to gather and create a network of contacts and relationships. Finally, the coffee shop will provide an important service to tourists who visit



our center, thus aiding the Authentic Tourism program.

Continuing the spirit of our After School Clubs, the ICB plans to organize a few summer classes for the youth of the area. It is our hope that these classes, in subjects such as Music, Art, and Computers, will allow the students to use and develop their creativity, a gift much needed in reviving Palestinian society.

The International Center also eagerly anticipates the opportunity to offer another guiding course to train tour guides in the summer of 2000. Once again, we hope to target women and more generally, to impact the tourism industry with a more comprehensive and responsible approach to tourism.

Finally, in 2000 we look forward to the publication of the research of the Christian Theological Education in Muslim Society project as well as the Open Eyes project with Melitz.

### **Lectures 1999**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Number of groups</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>% total</b>
USA	32	695	19
Germany	104	2462	63
Switzerland	11	185	7
Scandinavia	8	185	5
Canada	4	97	2
other European countries	6	204	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>3828</b>	

### **Bethlehem, different than in your travel book**

Experience a unique day in Bethlehem!



Bethlehem has more to offer than a star and manger. In the knowledge that more intensive programs are necessary than the brief ones offered by the Israeli dominated travel-business, we would now like to offer you a different Bethlehem experience.

In 1999, our first Intensive-Course for Palestinian Guides was completed and a city tour was created. That is why we are happy to present an authentic guided tour through the Old City of Bethlehem.

**Program suggestion:**

-

Begin the day with a **lecture** about a topic that explains the situation in the land of Palestine. Topics vary from the co-existence of Muslims and Christians to the resurrection of Palestinian culture.

Enjoy the famous Palestinian kitchen by eating lunch in one of Bethlehem's numerous restaurants or street cafés.

Afterwards start with the **City Tour**, which gives you insights into the culture of Bethlehem. Open your mind for Oriental culture! Encounter people whose life is full of Palestinian hospitality. And learn about the background of the Bible as you experience the Nativity Church.

Artist in focus: Have a look in our **Arts & Crafts Center** and meet the Palestinian artists working there. A unique diversity of art pieces is available in our gift shop.

Our gallery shows you different exhibits by local and international artists while a 200-year-old cave and an old water cistern invite you for a coffee break.

In the near future two expansions of the program will extend the Bethlehem-Day:

first a meal in a Palestinian home, prepared as it was in the time of the Bible.

And second, as the climax of the day, the Cultural Night, which gives you a new cultural experience including the Dabkeh dance and classical Arabic music.

If you are interested in this unique program, contact us. We would be glad to organize the Bethlehem Day that you cannot find in any travel book!

he **Dar al-Kalima Academy** needs your help!

In order to prevent possible land confiscation, the building program for the Academy was begun without the benefit of full funding. We can therefore use your help in one of the following areas:

1. Financial resources are needed to complete the construction of the Academy, including the wellness center, the swimming pool, and the meeting rooms. Classrooms, laboratories, recreational areas, a park, and a cafeteria also await funding.
2. Human resources are greatly needed. Offer to volunteer your time and gifts at the school. Consider an intergenerational Servant Event in Bethlehem. The possibilities are endless!

Please do not hesitate to contact us for more information. Don't miss an opportunity to impact the lives of numerous children and adults!

We are also proud to announce the release of the video "***Dar al-Kalima: The New Ministry Project in Bethlehem.***" This video explains the goals of the Dar al-Kalima project while showing the steps that are being taken towards their realization. For information on how to order your video, please contact:

Wheat Ridge Ministries

One Pierce Place, Suite 250E

Itasca, IL 60143-2634

(800) 762-6748 [www.wheatridge.org](http://www.wheatridge.org)

support Palestinian culture by purchasing local artwork from The Cave,  
the gift shop of the International Center of Bethlehem

*Plan an Advent Bazaar!*

*Sponsor a Craft Fair featuring items from Palestine!*

*Include Palestinian arts and crafts in a Third World art fair!*

*Glass pieces blown in our glass blowing workshops*

*Locally made embroidery*

*Ceramics* from our new art workshops

These and other locally made art work can be ordered from our gift shop. All of our arts and crafts for sale at our shop are made locally by Palestinians. Help support Palestinian creativity and connect to Palestine by purchasing a unique expression of the Palestinian spirit.