



NEWSLETTER

The Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem

May 2009

EASTER BRINGS SIGNS OF NEW LIFE AND HOPE

Greetings to all our brothers and sisters of Abraham. It is with great joy that we share with you the good news of faith in action across the Diocese. As we celebrate the resurrection, we greet our ecumenical partners as One, visiting and supporting each other as we share the message of peace and reconciliation across a land torn by conflict. As One, we also reach out to our Muslim brethren to assure them of our respect and cooperation, demonstrating our goodwill to our communities and the world. Just this week, I returned from a visit with the Grand Mufti of Syria, All Saint's parish in downtown Beirut, and the St. Luke's School for the Mentally Retarded in Lebanon. I returned from my trip with the good news that the our diocesan Arab Episcopal School was honored with an award by Prince Mired of Jordan. As our parishes in Jordan honor the Orthodox calendar for Easter, we honor their work by sharing some of their news and achievements with you in this edition of the newsletter.

DIOCESAN SCHOOL IN JORDAN RECEIVES AWARD FROM PRINCE

The Arab Episcopal School in Irbid, Jordan was honored with a visit and the presentation of an award for excellence in special education in recognition for its pioneering work mainstreaming blind and sight impaired children in classrooms with sighted children. The Arab Episcopal School reaches out to the interfaith community to provide education for special needs children in a healthy, nurturing, and respectful environment.

The award was presented during a visit by Prince Mer'ed and his staff from the King Hussein Organization.



(Petra)

الأخير مرعد يسلم جائزة للمدرسة الانسلفية العربية في إربد
Prince Mired presents award to school in Irbid

“We felt honored to have them travel all the way to Irbid to visit our whole school,” said Rev. Samir Esaid, the diocesan priest in Irbid.. “He was eager to visit the whole school, and saw the intergration of the blind and low-visioned students in both the kindergarten and the school.”

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In a letter describing the award, Rev. Esaid commended the school's teachers and helpers for their dedication. "Without their hard work, the things we do here would be impossible, and this seems like an appropriate moment to recognize them," said Rev. Esaid.

The school fosters an atmosphere of hope and creativity while promoting the school's mission of mutual respect and peace among students and the community.

With support and financing from the Diocese, the school started with the passion and dedication of Father Esaid and his wife Sabah Bisharat, (photo - second from right and left respectively) who researched the needs of the community and set about starting an innovative school, though they had no experience with educating children with vision impairments. One class, one grade at a time, Christians and Muslims, boys and girls together, from near and far, the school grew and their message spread.

To provide the highest quality education possible for the vision impaired children, teachers with vision impairments were hired as tutors for each classroom where they sit with the vision impaired children and teach them Braille as they work out their lessons.

BRINGING NEW HOPE TO OTHERS – Faith in Action in Jordan

Zarqa, Jordan, a place few associate with the romantic image of "ministry in The Holy Land," is the second largest city in Jordan, just northeast of Amman. Home to more than 50% of Jordan's factories, some 400,000 people live in this compact industrial center. With a significant Palestinian refugee population, there is no shortage of need in this densely populated city.

It is here in Zarka that the Diocese of Jerusalem, through a dedicated priest and his wife, the Rev'd Fa'eq Haddad and his wife Du'ua Bisharat, are re-vitalizing a diocesan school started in the 1950's. Tucked in a corner of Zarka, along a street which hosts other Christian schools of the Armenians and Nazarene's, one finds the Saviour's School, which lives up to its name.



Du'ua Bisharat, headmistress

Ms. Bisharat, the Headmistress, articulates the school's mission, 'to promote the diocesan vision of Christian love and co-existence, to bring the knowledge of Christ's love together with the world of arts & sciences, to encourage better ethics, loving behavior and tolerance...' In doing so, Du'ua and Fr. Fa'eq, who serves as Chaplain to the school in addition to his parish and diocesan responsibilities, share the Christian message of loving one's neighbor, without every asking their Muslim neighbors to change who they are. This respect is evident in the numbers of Muslim families who choose to send their children to this Christian school, and the fact that the enrollment has increased from 98 students to 398 under their leadership.

Amid the normal, sighted and able children who trudge to school each day, one finds excited faces of those who can't wait to arrive. Like our Arab Episcopal School in Irbid, the Saviour's School accepts students with disabilities. With no other educational facilities for children with vision impairments, the Saviour's School started mainstreaming children into their regular classrooms. Expanding the project to include children with other manageable impairments, the school now accepts children with moderate hearing and physical disabilities, as well.

In an area where education is hard to access for some families, and even harder to find for children with disabilities, the Saviour's School shines as a beacon of hope amidst the poor and despairing.

In talking with a few mothers, whose children with disabilities attend the school, one could see the universal smile of love as the mothers described their appreciation for the school. One covered in modest clothing and head-covering, another hidden behind a black chadorah, and a third in modern clothing, all mothers were pleased to have a place where their children were given new life and joy in learning and social living in a respectful environment. One mother said, "Before my daughter had no life. She sat in the corner all day. Now, she is the first to get up. She has friends. Look at her smile."



In Zarka, and elsewhere around the diocese, every day is Easter for these children.

THEODORE SCHNELLER SCHOOL MOVES INTO A NEW FUTURE WITH THE OPENING OF A ROPE GARDEN

At the Theodore Schneller School, boys of all backgrounds and abilities come together for the opportunity to build productive lives. Orphaned or marginalized, learning challenged or emotionally confused, boys at the Schneller School receive the individual attention and programs needed to boost their self-esteem, discover their abilities, learn new skills, and create hope through specialized educational and vocational training.

With two hundred and sixty-five boys and twenty-nine teachers, the challenges at the Schneller School are great. Nurtured under the pastoral leadership of the Rev'd Hanna Mansour, the boys have a sense of self-worth and mutual respect which is at the heart of the schools ministry. As Father Hanna moves on to a new ministry, Mr. Ghazi Musharbash has undertaken the challenge of bringing the school into the future. Shortly after Mr. Musharbash arrived, the construction of a Rope Garden was completely and a small

ceremony was held to mark this new movement in the updating of facilities at Schneller School.

With the long standing support from EMS, a German outreach ministry, Klaus Schmidt, an EMS representative, has been on campus to assist with the transition and school development. Plans for the school include the addition of new programs, and further updating of the facilities, including the Guest House, which has spacious accommodations for visiting groups. We look forward to sharing more good news from Schneller in the future.

*FOR MORE STORIES OR TO DONATE TO THESE SCHOOLS,
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The Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, a diocese of the worldwide Anglican Communion, extends over five countries, including Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Palestine and Israel, within the Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East. There are 27 parishes that minister to the needs of their communities, centered on the Cathedral Church of St. George the Martyr in Jerusalem. The church supports 33 institutions, which include hospitals, clinics, kindergartens and schools, vocational training programs, as well as institutions for the deaf, the disabled and the elderly, reaching out to interfaith neighbors in mutual respect and cooperation.

Cathedral Staff:

Bishop of the Diocese of Jerusalem: The Rt Rev'd Suheil Dawani

St. George's Cathedral Church, Arabic Speaking Congregation, Jerusalem: The Rev'd Canon Hosam Naoum

The Cathedral Church of St. George, English Speaking Congregation: The Rev'd Canon Robert Edmunds