

International Center of Bethlehem

Annual Report 2001

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Progress Report The International Center of Bethlehem & The Dar al-Kalima Academy

Dear friends,

Salaam from Bethlehem,

On behalf of all the ICB and Dar al-Kalima staff members as well as the beneficiaries, we would like to thank you for your commitment to our work, continuous prayers and support.

The last year was, without any doubt, the most difficult year in our lives. The invasion of Bethlehem and of many other Palestinian cities, the total collapse of the tourism industry, the unemployment rate of over 75% in our region, the traumatization of children and adults and above all the lack to see the light at the end of the tunnel of the vicious circle of violence have all presented big challenges to our lives and work.

Yet, in the midst of it all, and under very difficult circumstances, our staff was very busy bringing hope to this hopeless situation determined to **create a brighter future and to impart new hope.**

In the middle of all the destruction, the construction at Dar al-Kalima Wellness Center and Conference Center went on. Thus, creating hundreds of job opportunities and at the same time making a statement like that of prophet Jeremiah that we will not give up on our land. In the midst of destruction we are building and creating prospects. And in the midst of unemployment, we are upgrading the skills of young professionals through training. By employing new marketing strategies we are helping artisans to earn their income in dignity and through the work of their hands. And in the midst of trauma we are bringing healing and wellness into the lives of many children and youth through art and music. Last but not least, through advocacy work we are giving a voice and a face to our people.

Going through troubled waters in 2001, the Center proved to be a beacon of hope for Bethlehem, a place with a special ecumenical spirit and a place of genuine encounter between Christians and Muslims, between Palestinians, Europeans and Americans.

Now we are looking forward to May 2002, where new facilities will be inaugurated at the School and the Center. In this way we will reach out to many more people in need! With the help of our Lord and with your support, we can move mountains. We thank you all and present you with a report on the programs and developments that have taken place at the ICB and the Academy in the year 2001.

The International Center of Bethlehem Dar al-Nadwa al-Dawliyya

Background

The ICB is a Lutheran-based and ecumenically oriented institution serving the whole Palestinian community. Established in 1995 under the umbrella of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, it is committed to engage the local community to assume a proactive role in shaping their future by empowering them, training future leaders and developing human resources through awareness campaigns, vocational training and education. As a cultural center, the ICB is committed to strengthening the Palestinian identity, cultivating artistic talent, and facilitating intercultural encounter and exchange.

The programs offered at the ICB include Contextual Theology, Authentic Tourism and Guides' Training, Intercultural Encounters between Youth and Children, Communication Training, Reintegration for Returnees, Women Studies, Art and Crafts, Music, Continuous Education, and Advocacy.

The ICB's name in Arabic is 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 it has opened, the ICB has provided services for more than 20,000 people annually, both local and international, and the numbers keep growing (although in 2001 the number of international beneficiaries has declined due to less travel to Palestine as a result of al-Aqsa Intifada).

The building that houses the ICB stood witness for hopelessness and despair prior to its renovation. It was an old abandoned building, constructed originally in 1886 and temporarily used as a shelter for refugees after the 1948 war, and was part of the Lutheran School until the mid 1970s. The renovation took several years to complete and most of the work performed was through joint efforts of Palestinian and German youth volunteers. In 1992 the first phase was completed with the opening of the Abu Gubran Guesthouse. In 1995 the second phase was completed with the inauguration of the International Center of Bethlehem. A coalition was forged between the ICB and the National Music Conservatory in 1997, which brought into existence the National Music Conservatory-Bethlehem Chapter, the first of its kind in the Bethlehem District and the whole southern region of Palestine. In the year 1999, the Arts and Crafts Center of the ICB with its art workshops, galleries and 'Kahf' Gift Shop was inaugurated. The Dar al-Kalima Model School opened its doors to 240 plus students in 2000, and during the same year, the ICB expanded to include the adjacent buildings for administration purposes and more rooms for meetings and gatherings. During the spring of 2002, the Dar al-Kalima Conference Center, the Bethlehem Media Center and the Internet Club shall open, thus expanding further to meet the diverse needs of the community. In the next 2 years, plans are in place to complete the Model School, and open the Wellness Center. The growth of the ICB empowers it to better meet the diverse needs of the ever-increasing number of beneficiaries.

New Staff and Volunteers

The staff of the ICB, with a majority of women employees, is highly educated and well qualified. The majority of the staff members are graduates of international universities who have returned during the past 6 years, believing in the mission of the ICB. Back in 1995, when the ICB was officially inaugurated, it had a staff of 4 persons. Now, 6 years later, the ICB is employing 19 persons on full-time, part-time and volunteer basis, and this number does not include the artisans working at the art workshops, the part-time lecturers for the guiding and the communication courses, or the teachers of the Dar al-Kalima Model School. In 2001 six new staff members joined the ICB and others left to go for further training abroad. The new staff members are: Rev. Sandra Olewine (Intercultural and Leadership Training program), Mr. Sami Abu Ghazaleh (Youth Program

Coordinator), Mr. Shady Hannouneh (Network Technician), Ms. Carol Dabdoub (Marketing Coordinator), Ms. Lara Nassar (Marketing Assistant), and Ms. Carol Michel (Events Coordinator). Ms. Randa Canavati, who worked with the Youth Program, left to Germany for a Masters Degree.

Volunteers have always been important to the work of the ICB. In 2001, new volunteers came and previous ones returned home. All of these volunteer have not been deterred by the situation in Palestine and chose to be among us even during these very difficult times. From Germany, Ms. Birgit Schaefer and Mr. Marc Frings have been at the ICB since the fall of 2001, and are planning to stay for most of 2002. As for those who were with us during 2001, some stayed for the duration of two weeks while the others for a few months. These volunteers worked in different programs. Ms. Diana Jessen from Germany, worked with the Authentic Tourism program, while Ms. Carolina Zanelli from Italy, taught a mosaic course at the **Arts and Crafts Center**. Moreover, Ms. Cathy Croghan Alzner, from the USA, taught a first aid course to the Guiding Course as well as another health related mini course for the children of the Dar al-Kalima School while Rev. Curtis Zeiske, also from the USA, helped us with some research work. Other volunteers include Dr. Hanswulf Bloedhorn from the Deutsches Evangelisches Institute of Archeology in Jerusalem, who gave a series of lectures to the guiding students on the **history of Palestine in the Hellenistic and Roman periods** and Dr. Ulrike Bechmann, who lectured on the subject of **Women in the Hebrew Bible**. We thank them all for their contribution.

The ICB, from the beginning, was determined to generate local income so as not to be dependent on outside funding only, and to insure its sustainability. Programs such as Authentic Tourism, the Cave Gift Shop, and other ICB services had generated local income and were a major contributor to the ICB's budget. Due to the political situation, this income has dropped significantly and consequently has affected the budget of the ICB in general. Yet, we are fortunate that we have received funds to hire some of the new staff members, whose contribution to the ICB is essential for promoting sustainability.

The philosophy and approach of the ICB are comprehensive. Not only does the ICB provide an infrastructure for all its programs to operate from, but also there is the continuous education and training to make sure that the ICB is truly meeting its beneficiaries' needs, and the follow-up to insure that the services provided are indeed in harmony with the society's demands and changes.

-I-
The Art & Music Program

Art Program

The Dar al-Kalima Arts and Crafts Center

The **Arts and Crafts Center**, which was opened in December 1999, is made of three units, namely The Workshops, the Cave Art Gallery and the Cave Gift Shop. The abovementioned facilities were partly constructed and fully renovated with funding from the Church of Sweden.

1. The Workshops

The **Dar al-Kalima Arts and Crafts Center** workshops have been especially designed and equipped for local crafts, some of which are quickly dying out. These crafts include mosaic, ceramic, glass blowing, stained glass, painting, clay & plaster, and jewelry.

A large number of courses have been offered at the **Workshops** since their opening, thus providing needed training programs and courses for the local artists, especially those who are unemployed. The program during the year 2001 was mainly concentrated on introducing new and upgrading already existing training courses. Local as well as international artists conducted the courses. The training courses are designed and provided by the **Arts and Crafts Center Workshops** with the aim of:

- Upgrading artists and provide them with new skills
- Encouraging artists' creativity, and improving the quality of their artwork
- Training and qualifying new artists
- Creating new job opportunities
- Promoting the artistic crafts in the society
- Enriching the artisans' experience and developing their skills

The most outstanding workshop-courses during the 2001 were:

The Art of Shaping: Hand-Shaping Ceramic Workshops

Two ceramic hand-shaping workshops were held in 2001. The first workshop was held between March 15 and April 30, 2001, while the second was from May 21 to June 18, 2001. Miss Samaher Romi, a remarkable young Palestinian woman ceramic artists working at the Arts and Crafts Center workshop, supervised both workshops. In addition to providing training for 12 young women, the workshops were intended to develop the skills and encourage Ms. Romi herself. Out of the 12 women who got their training at the Arts and Crafts Center workshops, 5 graduates are working in the ceramic field by producing their own designed items and selling it through the Cave gift-shop. Moreover, 2 of the five are

teaching ceramics at Dar al-Kalima Model School.

Reviving Ancient Industry: Mosaic Workshop



An intensive mosaic workshop was held during the whole month of August 2001. Eleven committed students, from different areas of residence, backgrounds and professions were dedicated to completing the course. The Arts and Crafts Center added new and needed Mosaic equipment, furniture, tools, materials, etc. to the workshops. Five of the graduates of the course are still practicing the mosaic craft. Two are teaching it, while the other three are producing various mosaic pieces, with various sizes and designs. The Italian mosaic artist, Ms. Carolina Zanelli, supervised this successful first mosaic workshop at the Arts and Crafts Center. Carolina wrote: "It's very hard for me to say my feelings with words, maybe one day I'll make one mosaic called "Bethlehem", where I will put the colors of my feelings, the shapes of the great hospitality of the Palestinian people, the dark and the colorful "tessere" of the sadness and the hopes of the Palestinians and actually I'd like to make a "music mosaic", with the sounds of the Holy Land... who knows if I ever will be able to make such a mosaic...maybe I have to come again, to better understand what to do....next year? Who knows? Inshalla! I wish you the best and I hope to see you again, sooner or later!"



Imagination Knows No Boundaries: Design Workshop

The first design workshop to be offered at the Arts and Crafts Center, the workshop was held during September and October 2001 and was attended by 8 participants. Ms. Samar Ghattas, a member at the VISION artist group of the ICB and an art lecturer at the Bethlehem University, supervised the Design Workshop. The course will be offered more frequently, especially that it aims at developing the artistic skill and taste of all the **Arts and Crafts Center** artisans. Mr. Jabra Mitwasi, a calligrapher and a member at the VISION artist group, gave 2 lectures during the course on the history and use of Arabic calligraphy.

Recycling Glass, Creating Beauty: Glass-Fusing & Bead-Making Workshop

This workshop is considered as a special one, since it is the first self-training workshop that is held at the **Arts and Crafts Center** workshop complex, not to mention that it is the first glass-fusing workshop in the area. Therefore, it is a big challenge to the participants, as well as to the program. The workshop started by the mid of September 2001 and is supposed to end by the end of Jan. 2002. Fourteen participants attended the first meetings, several of whom continue working in this field and are producing pieces. These artisans, who meet regularly and continue working on new creative ideas, are already producing fused glass items for marketing them at the Cave Gift shop. The next step of the glass fusing will be the bead-making workshop, which will start only by the beginning of 2002.



Future Artists For Palestine: Children's Art Workshops

During the year 2001, the children of Palestine were living under tense and traumatic conditions, full of violence and fear. However, the **Dar al-Kalima Academy** and the ICB tried to create a different environment and a peaceful surrounding full of hope and creativity for the children in the Bethlehem region.

During the children's summer vacation, precisely between the June 18th and July 19th, 2001, the **Dar al-Kalima Academy and the ICB** organized a summer camp that took place at Dar Al-Kalima Model School. Almost 120 children participated between the ages of 4-16. The course offerings included theatre, ceramic, music, arts, computer & Internet, tourism in Bethlehem, dancing, guitar, Dabkeh (traditional dancing) and self-defense.

The Summer Camp was significant in that it concentrated on the importance of developing personal skills and talents of the children's own choosing. In the registration form, each boy/girl was given the chance, some for the first time in their life, to indicate his/her preferences of suggested activities. Thus, the child's opinion was important. Such method is a departure from the traditional style of education in Palestine and one that gives young people a sense of responsibility towards their choice. The Summer Camp ended on July 19th with a gathering in Dar Al-Kalima School campus, where parents came to see what their children had achieved during the previous month of activities.

Due to the success of the art activities of the summer camp, the children asked for more programs and activities during the school year, especially in the drawing & painting and ceramic disciplines. Consequently, the **ICB** has started a continuous Friday morning program for youth. The focus in the weekly Friday's classes during August, September and October 2001 was on drawing and painting. The artist working with the youth concentrated on basic techniques and rules of drawing lines, shading spaces, coloring surfaces and mixing colors. There were a variety of exercises including drawing a still life, enlarging a photo, copying a painting and painting freely. The plan for the coming year is to continue with the Art Club for children, starting after the Christmas vacation, every Friday, where ceramic, drawing and painting classes will be taught. Moreover, there are already some plans and suggestion for another Summer Camp during the summer vacation of 2002.

2. The Cave Art Gallery:

Since its opening, the **Cave Art Gallery** has been hosting the works of local and international artists. The **Cave Art Gallery** encourages the artists to express themselves and to share their arts with the society. In addition, the **Cave Art Gallery** is helping to revive the local community's sense of art and beauty.



In spite of the outbreak of the second Intifada in September 2000 and despite all the obstacles caused by the political situation, the tradition of hosting art exhibition that the **Cave Art Gallery** has started did not stop. However, the focus of this year was on presenting local artists as well as international artists residing in Palestine. Such focus had the effect of providing these artists with an outlet for their creative energies during these very difficult times, support to continue working on their art, and help to get more in touch with their surroundings. We will resume inviting international artists to put their work on display once the political

situation allows for it.

Some of the outstanding exhibitions that we hosted were the following:

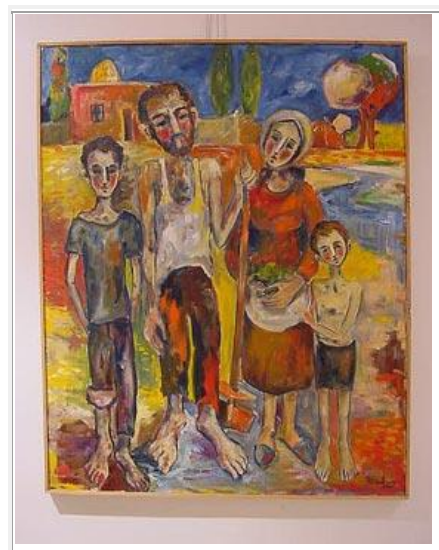
Allusion, by Ms. Samar Ghattas, a young woman artist from Bethlehem. The exhibition, which was held from January 5th to February 7th 2001, included watercolor works mainly and a few graphic art works.



Scent of Grass after Rain, by Ms. Samaher Romi, a young woman artist from Bethlehem. The ceramic-works exhibition of Ms. Romi was held from March 17th to April 20th 2001. Ms. Romi chose to exhibit her ceramic works accompanied by poetry verses, some of which were written by the artist herself.



Recall, by Father Endza Babakhanian, an Armenian priest living in East Jerusalem. His oil paintings are yet express the pain and suffering of Armenia and the Armenian people. The paintings were on exhibit between May 16th and June 16th, 2001.



Poetry of the Garden is the second ceramic exhibition by the Ms. Momineh Ali, who is originally from the Philippines but is married to a Palestinian and lives in the village of Za'tara near Bethlehem. The Poetry of the Garden exhibit was hosted between June 18th and July 1st, 2001.



Swamp, by Mr. Rimaz al-Araj, a Palestinian artist from Bethlehem. His works are conceptual and are drawn using simple techniques. The Swamp exhibition, which was put on exhibition for almost the whole of October and November 2001, was our last exhibition for the year 2001.



3. The Cave Gift Shop: More Than A Souvenir Shop

The Cave Gift Shop was found to give Palestinian artists and musicians the opportunity to market their artwork. After a period of closure, due to the political situation, The Cave Gift Shop was reopened in September 2001 and a new marketing coordinator, Ms. Carol Sansour-Dabdoub, as well as a new marketing assistant, Ms. Lara Nassar, have been hired to market the artists work and to handle all the Cave Gift Shop sales activities.

Since September 1, 2001 the activities and achievements of the Cave Gift Shop can be summarized as follows:

- A. There has been a move towards product development, whereby we try to enhance products in such a way that they become more competitive in the international markets. (Through training and supervision).
- B. It has been a little over a year now—since the start of al-Aqsa Intifada in September

2000—that the tourist industry especially in Bethlehem has been deteriorating, reaching to a total halt. This halt has prevented us from marketing our products locally since the tourists who had been visiting the Holy Land before September 2000 are now non-existent in Bethlehem. A need to reach these would-have-been visitors, wherever they are, was therefore necessary. Hence, we conducted a number of strategic marketing campaigns whereby we participated in local fairs (where such tourists can be seen more than in Bethlehem, like in Jerusalem) and international fairs, where these tourists actually come from. Furthermore, a section of our current web page has been dedicated to the Cave Gift Shop and the products available at our center. There has been quite a demand for our promoted products through the said web site.

- C. As a marketing activity, the Arts and Crafts Center and Cave Gift Shop participated in the annual Bethlehem Christmas Bazaar that takes place in Cologne-Germany. Three artists, representing the ICB, were present in the Bazaar, demonstrating their art (Calligraphy and Ceramics) on site. In addition to the works of the three artists that were present, products by other artisans from the Arts and Crafts Workshops were on display in the ICB selling booth. The Bazaar was held for a whole month before Christmas in one of the busiest squares in Cologne, next to the famous Dome. These products included stained glass, olive wood, mosaic and embroidery. Our participation in international and /or local fairs comes as an opportunity to expose the works of the artists and artisans of the ICB to the world and vice versa.
- D. A new brochure about the Cave Gift Shop has been published and distributed in the fairs that have already taken place. More will be distributed in Bethlehem during the Christmas festivities.
- E. We are currently in the process of creating two new websites www.bethlehemchristmasmarket.org and www.holylandartsandcrafts.org which we hope will help increase our presence in the whole world.
- F. A Christmas open house was held at the Cave Gift Shop on December 23, 2001, where a number of national and international dignitaries as well members of the local community have been invited. The aim of this event—other than the uniting spirit fit for the occasion—was to introduce the Cave Gift Shop and the products available, with the intent that these guests would pass on the message to their relatives and acquaintances here and abroad. We will be aiming at turning the “December 23 Cave Gift Shop Open House” into an annual event during the advent season, thus having our clientele get used to having a pre-set social outing on that day. By so doing, some of our guests will make sure to wait for that day to buy some-if not all-of their Christmas gifts.



Music Program

The music department at the ICB had a busy year in 2001. In addition to teaching music at the **Dar al-Kalima Model School**, the music program coordinator Mr. Johannes Zang has been busy at the **ICB** conducting two major activities, one is teaching organ and guitar and the other conducting the ICB's choir Najmat Baitlahem (The Star of Bethlehem)

1. Future Church-Organists

Teaching church organ in Bethlehem and Jerusalem, which is the first organ teaching in the Lutheran Church in Palestine after more than half a decade of no organ classes at all, started in February 2001. Three students are from Bethlehem, where they are taught to play the one-century-old organ at the Christmas Lutheran Church. The fourth student, who is from Jerusalem, is receiving lessons at the Redeemer Church in Jerusalem. At the beginning, the focus was on technique: i.e. work with the feet on the pedal part and then coordination between hands and feet. Then, some classical pieces and church hymns were played. According to Mr. Zang, disruption in the teaching schedule is among the major problems that he faces. He says, "I like teaching very much, although teaching had to be interrupted for about 2 weeks due to the Israeli invasion of Bethlehem in October and then again for another two weeks due to technical electricity problems that we had in the Church".

2. An Instrument For Healing: Guitar Music Teaching

Another instrument that was taught during 2001 at the ICB was the guitar. Two guitar courses were taught, where in the beginner's course four students participated while in the second one, five advanced students are enrolled. In both guitar courses the students learnt mainly to accompany songs as well as some basic music theory (cadence, harmony). Therefore, every student should be now familiar with playing and transposing songs. Of his experience with teaching music, Mr. Zang the music coordinator says, " I am so impressed that in these difficult situations young people want to study music and come voluntarily. Music has many functions in these days of occupation and siege. It is a medium to ventilate and express emotions, feelings, thoughts, frustrations, anger, feelings of helplessness and the sense of "no future" as well as other unconscious and oppressed feelings. It also is a medium for expressing feelings of joy, happiness and success. At the same time, music is a beautiful and aesthetic medium, which helps to develop social skills like patience, tuning to each other, being part of a group, and group discipline."

On the third week of the Advent, the students of both the organ and guitar held a concert for friends and family, where they performed songs, hymns and classical pieces. An audience of around 60 people enjoyed this performance, which put them in a Christmas mood and took them away for a while from the troubles of the every day life in Bethlehem.

3. The Najmat Baitlahem Choir: Nations In Harmony

The Najmat Baitlahem choir (Star of Bethlehem) continued its weekly practice meetings, despite the prevalent political situation where some rehearsals had to be cancelled. The makeup of the group, the members of which are both Palestinian and international, is what makes this choir group unique. The singers of the choir, the number of which is about 10 singers, are committed members who come regularly and participate enthusiastically. In 2001 the choir has not performed publicly, but is planning to continue practicing so that they can be ready to do so in 2002.

Community Outreach

1. Cooperation With Local Institutions

- a. Cooperation with Bethlehem University
During the fall semester, 2001 the Occupational Therapy Program at the Bethlehem University had its art training courses in cooperation with the **Arts and Crafts Center**. One of the ICB rooms was used as classroom, where the students received instruction on some non-theoretical aspects of their training. The students also had a basic intensive ceramic

course at the ceramic workshop, in the ICB's workshop complex. This ceramic course was arranged by the Arts and Crafts Center and was supervised by Ms. Samaher Romi, one of the artists at the ICB. The **Arts and Crafts Center** is happy about this cooperation and is seeking to cultivate cooperation agreements with other institutions in the area, since such collaborations assure that the program is achieving one of its main aims, namely reaching out to the local community and promoting art within the society.

- b. Cooperation with the Mental Health Hospital in Bethlehem
The International Center of Bethlehem is working to promote the use of art as therapy tool. During 2001, Ms. Samaher Romi led a weekly ceramic workshop for the occupational therapy patients at the Mental Health Hospital. This experience has been a positive one and has demonstrated the importance of art for wellness and healing.

2. New Heights with Bright Stars

The damage done to the souls of the children of Bethlehem during 2001 needs immediate action that will put them on the path of healing. Therefore, after the last invasion of Bethlehem in October 2001 the ICB launched a one-year campaign entitled the 1000 Bright Stars, which started during the Christmas season of 2001. The official start of this one-year program will be May 2002. Children participating in the program are between the ages of 6-16 and they are from the areas that have been most affected by the October 2001 invasion (Old city of Bethlehem, Beit Jala, Azza Camp, Aida Camp, and Hindaza hill area). This project is composed of 5 interconnected parts that includes art, environment, music and theater, sports, and communications. All of these parts will focus on expressing the emotions, fears, thoughts, and visions of the young people of Bethlehem during the project's year. Artists, musicians, actors, journalists, environmentalists, communications experts, physical education experts, educators, and child psychologists will be involved in this project.

Accomplishments and Challenges For the Art and Music Program

In addition to adding infrastructure in Bethlehem that serves the cultural and creative needs of its inhabitants, the **Arts and Music Program** has become one of the main training venues for people with artistic talent. However, the second Intifada has presented **Arts and Music Program** with the challenge of limiting the number of international artists and art teachers coming to Palestine, who would otherwise share their artistic experience with the Palestinian artists through exhibiting their works and/or providing training courses for Palestinian artists.



Infrastructure wise, we have been able to finish the renovation of a small workshop in the administration building, which was completed in November 2000. We are working on the new Galleries, which will be opened in May of 2002.

-II-
**Authentic Tourism
Program**

Empty Places At The Inn

There were too many empty places at the "Inn" during 2001. In fact, many inns and hotels were completely closed due to lack of pilgrims and tourists visiting Palestine and Israel for the year 2001. For Palestine, the tourism industry is the backbone of its economy, and for Bethlehem in particular, it is tourism and all its related services, including the making of traditional handcrafts that is the main source of income. However, since the October 2000, Bethlehem has been hit hard and many hotels, souvenir shops, and restaurants are going out of business. There is a high degree of poverty among the population as a result, with unskilled labor and almost 65% unemployment rate. In addition, many people are forced to emigrate, in particular the Palestinian Christians, to escape the harsh political and economic realities shaped by the continuing Israeli occupation and its oppressive practices.

Our Authentic Tourism program has been affected severely during the year 2001 as well. At the heart of the program underlies the principle of having the tourists stay in the Palestine, experience the local culture, and encounter the local community, including the "living stones". However, since the Intifada broke out during September 2000, tourists stopped coming to Palestine, if at all they made it to the Holy Land, for media raised their fears and played on traditional prejudices by depicting incorrectly the Palestinian areas as "dangerous", and that its people were "hostile" and "violent". These misconceptions were so spread out, that a sharp decline in the number of visitors to Bethlehem, and to the ICB was felt immediately, and only sporadic and few of those who believed otherwise made it to the "little town of Bethlehem".

Travel in the Palestinian areas is possible, as long as it is implemented with a local escort or a Palestinian guide accompanying the group, and as long as it is done under security criteria of the day-to-day situation. The ICB does not share the view of governments that declare the Palestinian areas to be "closed" for foreigners.

The ICB was able to host and organize programs for a few groups and individuals in 2001. The emphasis of these programs was the current situation in Palestine and its effects on the residents. The majority of these programs were one-day programs, which included the Bethlehem old town tour and a seminar at the ICB. Visits also included Hebron, Nahalin, Teqoa and Artas, Mar Saba and Battir, where the shrine of Rabia' al-Adawiyah, the great woman mystic of the Sufi tradition is located. A participant in one of these tours called it "wonderful". In fact, it was the first chance for such groups to tour the West Bank, hear first hand some of the stories of Palestinians, and to experience themselves the current situation. Of this experience, one participant said "Most important for me was the way to Teqoa using public transport, changing cars several times at the [Israeli] barricades." Another one said that the view of destroyed biblical landscape, i.e. the gardens of Palestinian farmers, caused by Israeli bulldozing for new settlements was "shocking".



View from the helmet of the Rabia' Al-Adawiya's shrine in Battir towards the irrigated terraces.



Hunger for land: expanding the Israeli colony Beitar Illit 2 on terraces of Wadi Fuqin and other villages around. Biblical landscapes are bulldozed and "modernized".

More about the Palestinian village of Teqoa: "[Prophet Amos' words still ring true](#)", an article on www.annadwa.org.



The group of clerics and scholars from Tantur visited the southeast of Bethlehem, here the Closed Garden Convent in Artas.

A few groups came also for longer than a one-day visit. In March a German group of young men, who do civil instead of military service, enjoyed a four-day program including Hebron, Wadi Khareitoun, Mar Saba and Artas. The program included a seminar on society and education in Palestine. During their visit, the group used public transport and felt safe and relaxed. (For more information about the visit, please read the article "[What in fact is dangerous here in Bethlehem?](#)").



Using the public transport to Herbon – Al-Khalil means changing the vehicle several times and crossing the colony's highways on foot. An Israeli patrol approached a participant and warned against the "dangerous" Palestinians – the German guest asked back, what is the soldier, who is his age, doing here in the West Bank? Photo: Stefan Phillip

For the ICB, the decline in the number of visitors affected adversely its fiscal budget. We are one of the few local organizations that pride itself on contributing significantly to its budget through its income-generating projects rather than depending largely on foreign donors for its sustainability. The Authentic Tourism program was a major local contributor to the budget, and the loss of such an income has meant the need to look for alternatives, as the tourism situation now seems bleak.

Therefore, we have chosen to focus for the coming two years on developing a three to four day programs in the Holy Land for Academies and Seminaries, as well as for solidarity peace groups and journalists.

Intensive Course For Palestinian Guides

Despite the pressure on students and lecturers alike, the ICB has kept the Intensive Course for Palestinian Guides running. The decision to continue with the theoretical part of the Course, which started in June 2000 and was scheduled to end in December 2001, was positively received by the students who have shown a great determination to continue with the Intensive Course. Thus, we have been teaching the different courses that the students need to take as part of their training, but we have not been able to conduct the majority of the field trips, given the restrictions placed on our movement by Israel both within the West Bank and Israel. In 2001, the academic program was interrupted only after the first invasion of Israeli tanks into Beit Jala in August 2001 and again during the invasion of the Israeli army of Bethlehem in October 2001. Topics taught included Religion (Judaism, Christianity and Islam), Old Testament, Flora and Fauna, History of Palestine (Stone Age, Bronze Age, Iron Age, Neo Babylonian, Persian, Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Ummayad, Abbasid, Fatimid, Crusader, Ayyubid, Mamluk, Ottoman, Modern Palestinian) and Palestinian Cultural Studies.

Still, when the situation allowed, we have implemented some of the field trips. To avoid any risk for the participants an exploration mission would take place before each trip. The coordinator Mr. Kuntz and some of the students, in preparation of field trips, undertook a few missions to Jericho, Teqoa and Nablus. Although no field trip followed to these particular places, those involved in helping the coordinator learnt rules of safety, which were implemented in field trips that actually took place. These field trips included 2 field trips in Bethlehem, Teqoa, Wadi Qilt (on the way to Jericho), Mar Saba, and 2 field trips in Artas.



Practical training on site: Mr. George Sa'adeh presents to his colleagues as they listen to learn and to give feed back later, understanding the need for open communications between the guide and group.

During 2001 we have introduced a new component to the course, which is training the guiding students on the use of e-technology. This made the beginners familiar with the medium and the advanced students interested in using the Internet as a resource. The course was held by Shady

Hannona and Andreas Kuntz and included founding a virtual discussion group for the ICG participants.



Identifying the view from Dar Talamas to the south of Bethlehem, Ibrahim Al-Absi, trainee of the Intensive Course for Palestinian Guides, helps the "White Eagles" team of the Dar Al-Kalima Summer School to observe their environment.

As for the students of the Guiding Course and their make-up, they are a mixed group in terms of education background, religious background, place of residence, etc. To begin with, they are a group of 16 Palestinian men and women between the ages of 21 to 53. In the group, there are 5 women and 11 men who come from different geographical areas in Palestine. While some come from the towns of Bethlehem, Beit Jala, and Beit Sahour, others come from the villages of Batir, Nahalin, and al-Sawahreh al-Sharqiyeh and the rest are from the Refugee Camps of al-Deheisha, al-Fawar, and al-Arroub. As for the religious make up, 7 of the students are Muslim while 9 are Christian. Concerning the students' educational backgrounds, some have BA and BS degrees, others have vocational training, and others have Tawjihi/High School certificates.

Manual for Guides

Since 1997, the staff of the Intensive Guiding Course has been collecting materials from different sources. Archiving, to make the materials usable, has started and a manual "Explain Bethlehem" for the training field was developed in German and is in the process of translation into English. The manual, which could be used in the future not only for the Intensive Course but also as material for refresher courses of already licensed guides, uses a wholistic approach to guiding. Such approach includes the teaching and application of cultural self-awareness in combination with historical and religious sites. The manual "Explain Bethlehem" is specifically designed to train guides for the Old Town Tours of the Authentic Tourism Program. The first sample manual for other selected sites is currently being produced, with specific topics connecting history and identity, religion and pilgrimage, culture and experience.

Little Guides...Great Success



Is that the right answer? Okay, let's look for the way to the next station on the map! The "Lions" on their winning run at the Peace Fountain in the Old Town of Bethlehem.

The Authentic Tourism Program participated in the Dar Al-Kalima Summer School 2001 through organizing a town game for a group of children participating in the camp, which most probably is the first such game ever in Palestine. Nida' Aweineh, trained in the Summer School 2000 to guide youngsters in the Old Town, helped Andreas Kuntz and Nimer Aweineh to develop the activity, which was educational, creative and fun. Six teams had to find their way through the Old Town of Bethlehem looking for information and answers to questions concerning history, religion and heritage. The designed activities fired the imagination of the children and the difficult orientation tasks they had to undertake strengthened the qualities of cooperation and teamwork among them.



Now turn left! The "Tigers" find their way through the Deick-arch to the next station, again with tough questions.

Two teams came out as winners in the end. The Lions and the Tigers scored the same amount of points, while the team Love, despite losing the way, took the 3rd place since the team managed to return and score high on creative tasks. In the end, everybody was a winner and all participants of the six teams as well as the tour guide trainees, who were in supporting in stations and tasks, received certificates for their participation, even during the difficult times of siege in summer 2001. The town game is considered by the ICB as a model for youth, school and tourism awareness activities in Palestine.



Everybody is a winner. Both teams, the "Lions" and "Tigers", receive their certificates in the award ceremony in front of the participants in the Dar Al-Kalima Summer School 2001, youngsters and parents alike.

Abu Gubran Guesthouse

On a more positive note, which brings hope and light amidst the darkness, we would like to announce that Abu Gubran Guesthouse would be re-opened in May 2002 after undergoing renovation. Women artisans will redesign the 13 rooms of the Guesthouse; each with her own art will focus on a theme for the room she is to redesign.

-III-
Advocacy Work

A Voice To The Voiceless

The year 2001 was a very difficult and troubled one for us here in Palestine as the level of violence continued to increase in an alarming way. In the midst of all the pain and sorrow, the world media failed miserably to voice the story of Palestine in a way that helps people better understand the situation at hand. Therefore, the International Center of Bethlehem took on the responsibility to communicate the every day life to people around the world. Accordingly, a good deal of our work last year was dedicated to advocacy work. The work was conducted through different methods, namely: 1. The various letters we circulated during the year, a major part of which was during the Israeli incursion of Bethlehem. 2. The several articles and lectures we have published, both locally and internationally. 3. The numerous lecture tours our staff made throughout the year to different parts of the world, including the USA, Europe, the Mediterranean region etc. 4. The countless seminars and workshops we participated in as a Center, both locally and internationally.

Although this work required a great deal of strength and time, it was extremely rewarding. The various positive responses we received from around the globe and the "why didn't we know about this" message that we heard repeatedly made it clear that such work is not only vital but fundamental to the work of the ICB. We received many responses by email, telephone, fax, and in person from different parts of the world, expressing concern for the people living through this new reoccupation. These messages came from countries including Argentina, Australia, Botswana, Canada, Egypt, Fiji, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, India, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Nigeria, Northern Ireland, Norway, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Uganda, UK, USA, as well as many other places. Therefore, the Center will continue the advocacy work during 2002, hoping that the circles, which have started in 2001, will widen and draw larger numbers of friends and supporters.

2002 Campaign To End the Illegal Occupation of Palestine

In the context of the Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace (2001-2010) the World Council of Churches' Executive Committee meeting in September 2001 called upon member churches and ecumenical partners "to focus attention in 2002 on intensive efforts to End the Illegal Occupation of Palestine". The World Council of Churches is calling upon the various Churches to join their voices with those of the Churches in the Holy Land to pray for an end of the Israeli occupation and all the killing and bloodshed, to restore broken relationships and to be the instruments of peace. Over the years, the ICB has been keen on promoting the work of the WCC at the local level. In various meetings and deliberations with the WCC, the ICB has declared its full support for this initiative. The ICB is determined to exert all efforts possible to advocate and work for realizing this vision.

-IV-
**Communications
Program**

The Bethlehem Media Center

The Bethlehem Media Center is created to strengthen the role of Palestinians, and in particular the Palestinian Christians, in the news media worldwide since Palestinians do not have a voice or an outlet into the outside world. Therefore, the Bethlehem Media Center shall be a place where such a voice can be articulated and communicated and networks established to empower the local community to tell its story and advocate for peace and justice.

The local community conceived the idea of the Bethlehem Media Center, after realizing that as Palestinians we should not be spectators but rather become actors for change. With this media initiative, the whole Palestinian community shall benefit, who has been so far marginalized with regards to media coverage. The Bethlehem Media Center shall focus on and work with the Palestinian Christian community, church related organizations (CROs), professionals working in departments of communication (in particular women and young adults), Palestinian and international journalists, Palestinian and international media networks, and related NGOs.

Our hope is that the Media Center will start operating in 2002. The specific outcomes of the Bethlehem Media Center are as follows: An updated online database, archive and a website on the Palestinian Christian community that is accessible to journalists, media personnel, CROs, NGOs and others; A training infrastructure for continuous education in communication; A network that coordinates with professionals working in local and international media.

Bethlehem Online

With the growth of the International Center of Bethlehem and the increased number of employees, the need for a communications department was evident. New network infrastructure was installed in the ICB and Dar al-Kalima School at the beginning of the year 2001. These two sites were linked in order to facilitate Data exchange between them. In the year 2001, the ICB has installed an Internet connection, which provided an easy and fast Internet access. Currently there are 10 Computers and 2 servers at the ICB as well as 12 computers at Dar al-Kalima School, 9 of which form the nucleus for the computer lab at the school where the children of the school can access the Internet in their free time and through the programs that the school provide.

The main activity of the Communications Department is to provide service to all other programs at the ICB through the maintenance of the computers and Internet facility as well as upgrading and maintaining the ICB's homepage. Furthermore, the Communications Department is responsible for maintaining and updating the computer network, to which all computers at the ICB are connected.

Web Site

The Web Site was redesigned at the beginning of 2001 and the Communications Department has provided maintenance and updates to the web site on a regular basis.

Courses

One of the goals of the ICB is to provide technology-related courses in addition to other courses that it provides. Therefore, the Communications Department has conducted several courses during 2001, which took place at the computer lab in the Dar al-Kalima School.

- CCNA (Cisco Certified Network Associate) course:
The audiences of this course were system engineers and professionals who work in the IT (Information Technology) sector. The course aimed to introduce Cisco routers, switches, and their operating system. It also gave an introduction to the Network technologies and how to design computer networks. Mr. Isam Ishaq and Mr. Issa Qumsieh held this course between 20/9/2001 and 10/10/2001.
- Internet Course for Guides:

This was an 8-hour introductory course to the Internet for the guiding students at the ICB. The idea behind the course was to introduce the guides to this new technology so that they can use it to communicate with each other as well as with others in the same profession. Shady Hannona held this course between 6/8/2001 and 16/8/2001.

- **Introduction to the Internet for Children and Youth:**

This course was one of the programs in the summer school, which has taken place at Dar al-Kalima School. It taught children how to use the Internet, Email and to do searching on the web. Three classes were held, with 12 to 15 children in each class. The ages of the participating children differed, with one class having children from 9 to 12 while the other two had youth from 12 to 16 years.

Online Leadership Program

One of the programs that the ICB is involved in through its Communications Department is the **Online Leadership Program** that was conducted by Vesper Society and the World Council of Churches (WCC). The program is focusing on online leadership development with young people. The first step in the project is to create a "tool kit" (methodology for group leadership online) to assist young leaders in forming and maintaining a community. The second step is to test the tool by developing online communities.

Computer Center

Work is underway to open the Internet Café in May of 2002, which will provide Internet courses and train people to work in the field of online media. In addition to the Internet Café, the new facilities for the Communications Department will contain a training room, a testing center and a server room. With the new facilities, training courses will be taking place at the ICB as well as the computer laboratory in the Dar al-Kalima School. The design of the Internet Café is in such a way that it can be used as a lecture room, equipped with all the necessary equipment needed for such activity.

-V-
Youth Program

Local Activities

The year 2001 was not the best year for the Palestinian youth. The siege imposed on Bethlehem and the lack of security has obstructed the youth's movement and prevented them from organizing trips to other Palestinian towns and cities where they could network with other youth groups. In many cases, and during the repeated shelling Bethlehem, Beit Jala and Beit Sahour, these youth have even become prisoners in their own neighborhoods and sometimes were unable to attend their weekly gathering at the ICB in Bethlehem. Yet, despite the current situation, the youth group that regularly meets at the ICB, and which consists of 20 members and 2 leaders, was able to challenge the current situation and organize a number of joyful activities. These activities included going to movies, having barbeque parties, eating Sunday lunch together, holding dancing parties, watching videos, going swimming, visiting and inviting other youth groups in the Bethlehem area, and playing sports at the Dar al-Kalima Academy new playground.

International Activities

The ICB has continued in 2001 developing its international relations by sending our youth to visit youth groups in other countries, allowing them to have a cultural dialogue with others and giving them the opportunity to introduce their Palestinian culture to others. Two main youth groups from the ICB participated in youth exchange meetings in Europe during the year of 2001.

[Youth International Camp- Agape Centro Ecumenico](#)

Three young men were sent to represent the International Center of Bethlehem at the Youth International Camp in Italy, which took place between 21st-28th of July 2001. The Camp, entitled **"Under the Biggest Trees You'll Find the Best Shelter: The Environment, A Spiritual or Political Crisis?"** was held in Agape Centro Ecumenico in Italy. This is the second year that the International Center participates in Agape's youth camps and we look forward to a continued and more developed relationship with this important center.



The Kirchentag Meeting in Germany

In spite of all the frustration generated during the attempt to secure travel permits via Tel-Aviv airport for the youth from the Israeli military authorities, some of whom got their permits two hours before the scheduled departure time, the youth were able with the help of our German friends to participate in this event. Traveling to Germany amid such a dreadful political situation has put a heavy responsibility on the ICB to attend such an event, where we kept wondering till the last moment what would happen if the Israeli security denied the travel of this group at the last minute? Yet, the trip to Germany has helped so much in raising the morale and spirit of the youth members who participated in this year's event.

YAP Meeting in Sweden

The ICB has played an important role in calling for peace and justice. It started a program together with the Church of Sweden called A Youth Action Plan, YAP, whose aim is to give the youth the opportunity to play an effective role in calling for peace and working for justice. The YAP program, which includes a coalition of Palestinian NGOs as well as international, has held several local and international meetings since its inception. In 2001, the YAP held a meeting from July the 27th until August the 6th, the ICB took part in a special conference in Sweden on Human Rights, calling for Peace & Justice, and working on non-violent means by using the strategy of transformation. The Diocese of Lund hosted this conference in Sodra Hoka in the South of Sweden. The main goal of the conference was to gather people from different religions and national backgrounds to work together for a better future.

Following the return from this conference in Sweden, all participants got involved in networking through a living community on line. Borders and long distance have been shortened and YAP members feel they can connect to each other to inform one another about the situation in the country and what activities or announcements they would like to share.



-VI-
Intercultural Study
&
Exchange Program

2001 was a difficult year for the Intercultural Study Exchange program as the political situation continued to impede the flow of pilgrims and study groups. As such, the year 2001 was a year of design and development rather than hosting study groups. Three important new Intercultural Studies programs, which will begin in 2002 and 2003, are the result. These programs will become part of a larger project of the International Center known as the **Dar al-Kalima Academy**. The **Dar al-Kalima Academy** will seek to provide an innovative center for cross-cultural encounter and learning.

The first is the **Dar al-Kalima Ecumenical Study Program for Seminary Students**. It will offer a unique opportunity for participants to engage in a wholistic program of study in the land of Christianity's birth. We will explore biblical studies, theology and Christian formation through the lenses of the pastoral and prophetic needs of the Church in the third millennium. These lenses will be shaped by the diverse cultural, ethnic and denominational affiliations of the participants themselves, as well as by the two peoples and three faiths in Palestine/Israel today. Art, music, dance and other forms of communication will play a significant role in assisting participants to engage each other, the land and texts. This 2 –week program (with a third week optional) will be held in January and May of each year, with the first to be in May 2002.

Similarly, the **Dar al-Kalima Ecumenical College Study Program** has been designed to provide parallel experiences for young adults. The idea for this course developed from the increasing numbers of individual colleges that have been visiting the International Center and participating in lectures. We began to consider the benefits that would be possible if the **Dar al-Kalima Academy** were to bring these separate college groups together for an integrated program of lectures, presentations, workshops and on-site visitations. Not only would this experience provide unique exposure to historical, theological, political and biblical issues in the Holy Land, but it could also act as a forum for young adults from different regions of the world to come together and exchange ideas. In addition, this joint program between young adults could explore ways in which art, music and the media can be used to transform the world for the 21st century. The year 2002 will be a time to contact colleges from around the world to join us in the inaugural program in June 2003.

Lastly, the **Dar al-Kalima PEW Seminar** has been developed to offer pastors and laypeople active in education through communication, music, arts and media, an opportunity for five weeks of study, reflection, and wellness. Established around a concept of sabbatical, each week the program will focus on different fields of interest. Week 1 will be an introduction to the context of Palestine, week 2 on the bible in its original context, week 3 on gospel and culture, week 4 on electronic communications, and week 5 on theology and economics. Through a combination of lectures, workshops and field trips, participants will be given time to explore these issues, but also given time to walk, swim, read, sculpt, create music and much more. This program will be offered twice a year, in spring and late summer, with the first seminar beginning in late summer 2002.

Consultation on Strategic Planning

The ICB held an intensive consultation for its staff of 19 persons during December 26-19, 2001 in Jordan. The consultation was in response to the transitional period that the ICB is going through, in that the ICB is expanding its facilities to include a conference center, a media center, an Internet club, a completion of the model school, and a wellness center. With such an expansion, new programs shall be introduced and old programs and activities revised and redefined to serve better the expected increased number of beneficiaries. In addition, with such an increase in facilities, programs, and number of people who shall benefit from its services, an intra-reorganization of the ICB is needed to run the ICB operations more effectively and successfully.

The consultation aimed at planning strategically how best to smoothly move the ICB to its new state of being. During the consultation, a 4-year action plan was developed, taking into account all factors mentioned previously.

The outcome of the Jordan consultation was:

- A redefining of the programs, tasks, and work of the staff and strategically planning new programs as new facilities and increased number of beneficiaries are expected.
 - An intra-reorganization of the ICB's administration, human resource management and programs management.
 - A 4-year action plan until December 31, 2005 when the ICB will also move into a new stage as more facilities and wider programs are in our future plans. This action plan will be submitted for discussion and approval to the local governing board and the international advisory board, both will convene during May 2002.
 - Greater empowerment and increased commitment of the staff to the vision, mission, and work of the ICB as their input, issues of concern and opinions, through this consultation, were heard, addressed and taken into consideration.
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The Dar al-Kalima Academy

More than two years ago the construction work on the Dar al-Kalima Academy has started, both on the Madbassa Square site and the Mount Mureir site.

The al-Madbassa Site The Dar al-Kalima Conference Center (The Finnish Project)



The Construction of the Conference Center, which started in September of 1999, was originally planned to finish by May 2000. Due to unforeseen delays, work on the Conference Center is continuing and the opening date is scheduled now for May 2002. The total cost of the completed Conference Center, with part of the furniture, excluding equipments, is approximately \$5 million USD. The new events coordinator that has joined the staff of the ICB is preparing an events program for the opening celebration, which will be attended by the local and international friends of the ICB.

A multi-purpose hall, the Conference Center has a seating capacity for 400 persons with an elevated stage. It also has two rooms for simultaneous interpretation for 1+2 languages, control room for audio-visual facilities including a cinema, storage rooms, changing and rest rooms for the performers. *The Dar al-Kalima Academy Conference Center* will be the only venue of its kind in Palestine for a rich cultural life in Bethlehem and it will be used to host the following activities:

1. Conferences, including local and international conferences, national and international youth conferences, local and international cross cultural dialogue, panel discussions, and lectures. International seminars will also be held at the auditorium.
2. Artistic performances, including folklore dancing, theater performances, film presentations, local and international art exhibitions, as well as local and international concerts and choirs. Educational and community programs, including programs on the issues of democracy, human rights, civil society, art and music as well as a host of other relevant topics. Through using the Auditorium's broadcasting equipment, the educational and community programs will be disseminated to the wider Palestinian society reaching out to over 180 000 people.



The Mount Murier Site Dar al-Kalima School

1. Background

The Dar al-Kalima Academy is built on Mount Murier, which was bought in 1868 by the first pastor for the Christmas Lutheran Church, the German Missionary Samuel Muller, in whose name it was registered. The mountain remained under the control of the Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church until the British Mandate confiscated it in 1919. In 1952 Mount Mureir was registered in the Treasury of the Hashimite Kingdom of Jordan. In the most beautiful building constructed on it, which once housed the original Evangelical Lutheran School and whose opening was celebrated in 1898 during the German Kaiser's visit to Palestine, the Mental Hospital was opened. Later, in the 70s and 80s, the Court House the Central Market, the Fire department Unit, and other structures were constructed on its land.

With the arrival of the Palestinian National Authority, and with the support of the German Foreign Ministry along with the big efforts exerted by Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb and his colleagues at the International Center of Bethlehem, President Yasser Arafat issued an edict, designating part of the Mountain to be used to build the Academy. President Arafat's action was a result of his belief that this Palestinian establishment will be a nucleus for a Palestinian model school and Academy, which will focus on art, music, communications, as well as intercultural studies. On January 6th, 1998 President Arafat and Bishop Munib Younan, Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Palestine and Jordan, laid the cornerstone to Dar al-Kalima Academy in the presence of Bishop Christian Krause, President of the Lutheran World Federation, and a large gathering of Lutheran Church Leaders from twenty countries.

In fulfillment of the goals it set for itself, the work on the Dar al-Kalima School started in November 28th, 1999 and is progressing since then:



2. Accomplishments

Since the beginning of the construction process, the following has been accomplished so far

1. 3 Kindergarten classrooms (parts of which are occupied by the administration, until funding is found to build these facilities)
2. Classrooms for 1st –10th grade



3. Part of the Amphitheatre and Playground



4. Access Road (Parts of it)
5. Assembly Hall (without furniture)
6. Amphitheatre stage (The Millennium Stage donated by Bethlehem 2000 project Authority)



3. Challenges

From the beginning, there were many challenges that the founding of the Dar al-Kalima Academy faced. Limitations of time, parents concerns, as well as funding have all been issues that we had to deal with and try to overcome.

- a. **Limitation of time**
The construction of the Model School started immediately after the Norwegian Minister of Education broke the ground in Mount Mureir on November 28th, 1999. The fact was that we needed to finish the first part of the first phase as soon as possible, given the overcrowded location in which they were and the need for more space to implement the vision we have effectively. This involved constructing a building of a 4000-meter area in order to start the school year 2000/2001 in the new premises. Despite the tight schedule, the first phase of the Model school was finished in a record time of 9 months, allowing it to open its doors to its 237 students, 21 full-time teachers and 7 part-time teachers in September 3rd, 2000.
- b. **Parents' concerns and fears**
One of the major challenges to the Dar al-Kalima Model School was the fears and concerns of the parents. To begin with, we needed to fulfill the promises that we made to the parents the year before to move to the new school so that the children would have enough room to study and play. Also, we had to address the parents' fears concerning the future of their children and whether the changes in the curriculum that was being proposed by the Model School would give their children the right tools for future success. The concept of holistic learning, where students are introduced to self-based learning that enables them to discover their creativity, potentials, talents, abilities and interests was something new to the parents, whom had to undergo an educational process themselves to become advocates for rather than hindrances to the development process of the Academy.
- c. **Funding**
There is still a great deal of work to be accomplished, some of which we have secured funding for and will be starting on in February 2002, while others we still are seeking funds for.

4. Laboratories, 6 Classrooms, and Administration Building

To finish the Model School and to have it become a high school, there is a need to build 6 classrooms, 4 laboratories, Administration building. The completion of this part of the Dar al-Kalima is very necessary for the future growth of the Academy as a whole. This is due to the following:

1. The expansion of the model school into a high school will increase the local income, since more students will be attracted to the school in general. Although more teachers will be hired as a result, still the number hired will not offset the financial benefits to be gained.
2. The comparatively high fees that we are charging from the students, as compared to other local schools, means that we must provide necessary and special services. Among the necessary services are laboratories.
3. Without opening the high school, many parents will be hesitant to enroll their children at the Dar al-Kalima for fear that they may not find them places in other high schools once they finish the 10th grade and therefore, threaten their future.



5. Programs

Dar al-Kalima Model School's main goal is to be a model school that implements a holistic learning and teaching approach. This is accomplished through special training and educational methods and through the afternoon "Extra Curricular Program (ECP)", where students may choose from a wide range of clubs in Music, Arts, Sports, Languages, Communications, etc. The regular school program commences at 7:30 a.m. and ends at 12:55 p.m. The afternoon clubs (ECP) commence at 1:10 p.m. and end at 2:25 p.m.

6. New developments

During the period from January 2001 until December 2001, the following developments took place:

1. The classroom environment with regards to the various "Learning Corners" allocated for various subjects was re-evaluated and developed further. Each teacher is responsible for his/her own corner and the home teacher is responsible for the classroom as a whole. For instance, there is the languages corners, the Communications corner, the Mathematics corner, etc.
2. The classrooms' mini-libraries were further developed. However, they still require more books that are suitable for each age group. Further development relies on funding for this particular project.
3. The playground was asphalted and nicely equipped to serve as a multi-purpose playground (Basketball, Volleyball, Handball and Tennis), while the front courtyard was tiled and trees were planted.
4. Intensive upgrading courses for staff continued throughout the period in question. These courses are compatible with the School's philosophy and strategies. Workshops and seminars were held bi-monthly, in addition to special upgrading courses in conjunction with curricula, sponsored by the Ministry of Education. The afternoon "Extra Curricular Program" was re-evaluated and upgraded accordingly. Further developments and changes to this relatively new program will be implemented according to need.
5. As of September 2001 and with the hiring of a new music teacher, more emphasis on instrumental music than in the past has been adopted.
6. The Parent-Teacher-Association (PTA) was established prior to the period in question but became more active and functional during the period in question. Communication with the parents was strengthened through general meetings and the open day for parents. Also, regular contact with parents on an individual basis was intensified in order to encourage their participation with regard to the academic performance and the behavioral aspects of their children.
7. In June 2001, special functions and activities including drama, shows and an exhibit of student works in arts, crafts, science and other areas were held. All parents were invited to attend and participate.

- 8. Upon evaluation of staff performance in April 2001, it was inevitable for the administration to take on the responsibility of re-structuring and hiring new staff. Accordingly, in September 2001, 5 new teachers were hired to replace 5 other teachers.



7. Risks and obstacles

The political situation increased in complexity during the year 2001. This contributed to a worsening of the already deteriorated socio-economic situation within the Palestinian community. Bethlehem was affected most harshly by the prevailing situation, since it relies heavily on tourism. Many parents, who were capable of paying the Church- subsidized tuition fees, which cover only about 37% of the actual cost, are now unable to pay in full or in some cases not at all. To resolve this situation, the school's administration introduced in late December 2001, a sponsorship program in the hope that friends of the Lutheran Church abroad and locally would contribute to this fund to assist needy families to cover tuition fees.

8. School Statistics

The tables below reflect the numbers of employees and students in December 2001.

Title	Service		Gender	
	Full-Time	Part-Time	Male	Female
Director/ Principal	1	-	1	-
Adm. Secretary	1	-	-	1
Accountant	-	1	-	1
Teachers *	21	2	7	16
General Services	3	-	2	1
Total	26	3	10	19

Table1: Staff Statistics in December 2001.

*These figures are not inclusive of paid experts and volunteers who participate in the afternoon clubs (Extra Curricular Program). There are currently 10 paid experts and 4 volunteers (2 Germans and 2 Palestinians), who are all participating in the afternoon clubs on a Part- Time Basis. Also, 14 of the daytime program teachers participate in the afternoon Extra Curricular Program (ECP).

Date: December, 2001											
<i>School: Dar al-Kalima - Bethlehem</i>											
Class	Lutherans		Greek Orthodox		Other Christians		Moslems		Total		Together
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
K. G.	1	3	8	10	2	4	13	8	24	25	49
Grade 1	2	2	2	5	4	1	8	4	16	12	28
Grade 2	0	1	4	3	5	1	8	2	17	7	24
Grade 3	1	0	2	3	1	0	6	6	10	9	19
Grade 4	0	1	2	5	0	2	7	4	9	12	21
Grade 5	2	0	3	0	0	1	10	1	15	2	17
Grade 6	1	1	4	0	2	2	10	2	17	5	22
Grade 7	1	0	4	1	1	2	4	2	10	5	15
Grade 8	1	0	1	2	1	0	1	6	4	8	12
Grade 9	1	0	7	1	2	0	4	1	14	2	16
Grade 10	0	1	2	2	1	0	3	1	6	4	10
Total	10	9	39	32	19	13	74	37	142	91	233
Together B. & G.	18		71		32		111		233		

Percent 100%	8%	30%	14%	48%		
Table2: Student Statistics 2000/2001						

Table 2: Student statistics in December 2001.

The Dar Al-Kalima School will continue providing quality education to young Palestinians, regardless of sex, color, creed or social background. It will continue working to be a Model School that has a holistic approach to learning and teaching. Education is and will continue to be provided in a Christian environment, free of violence and hatred. This is an essential part of the mission of the local Lutheran Church, especially under the prevailing conditions in Palestine and Israel.

The Wellness Center

A new approach to health and wellness is what the project of **Dar al-Kalima Wellness Center** envisions for the children of Bethlehem in particular and those of Palestine in general. A holistic approach that takes into consideration the mind and the body is at the heart of the work of the **Center**. The project, which is made possible through the help of the **Wheat Ridge Foundation**, is in the process of construction. The facilities that contain a pool, health clinics and the nature reserve are expected to be operational in March of 2003.

The emphasis of the **Wellness Center** on preventive medicine will create a model for other schools to emulate. This model will ultimately cut down the cost of health services, since many of health problems of half of the population will be prevented or diagnosed prior to getting to the point, where medical care becomes either too expensive or not available at all.

An integral part of Dar al-Kalima Academy, the **Wellness Center** will provide athletic training to the school's children as well as develop programs for their parents. These parents in many cases are in need of constructive recreation in order to deal with the stresses of life around them. The long years of occupation and the recent violence and reoccupation of Bethlehem and of the other Palestinian cities has resulted in pent-up frustration within the Palestinian society that needs to be channeled creatively and in a positive manner, lest it becomes destructive and causes a disruption to the society as a whole. Indeed, such frustration has led to a rise in troublesome and counter productive social phenomena, such as domestic violence, violence against children, suicides and other social diseases as well as psychosomatic diseases. Such rise signals the need for definite and concrete measures to challenge and resolve these problems. One important solution is providing a space for children, youth and women, who are at risk, victims and potential victims of violence, where they can spend time away from their everyday violence and pressures participating in special workshops as well as playing sports. Through arts, music and sports, the emotional and psychological trauma caused by violence can be alleviated and the victims' healing process and recovery will be quicker. In the process of healing, an important emphasis will be placed on the soul and its needs. Given that healing of the soul is a difficult task to undertake, counseling will be emphasized to help make the process much easier.

The **Wellness Center** will use the entire infrastructure available to it (i.e. the swimming pool, the nature reserve, etc.) to give maximum benefit to the children and the community.

Concluding Remarks

Looking back at all that has been accomplished in the past year, we thank God who gave us the vision, the will, the faith, the many friends, partners and colleagues as well as the managerial skills to start the Dar al-Kalima Academy. We are confident that "He who began a good work will carry it on to completion".