

Church of Christ

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القدس - اسرائيل

March 2018

Dear Beloved Brethren. Date التاريخ

Once again we send you greetings and pray that all is well with you and that your growth spiritually is not being hindered by the many things that can easily stand in our way.

We are two quarters late in getting out our Newsletter but so much has been going on with us, in health and activity, that we simply have not had a time or opportunity. As some know, on November 15, 2017, I had surgery for my right eye. The surgery was good and my vision improve, but three weeks later I had flu, which effected my eye so my vision get low and it was hard to even see the letters to read or type. I had an optician doctor told me that I had edema. He said I need injection in the eye, so I went to the emergency room for eyes, and after I checked in, the doctor told me "we do not prefer to give you the injection, now." He gave me medicine drops for four weeks instead, and now I am doing much better. I see the doctor again soon about this. Then I had another surgery for my left eye on January 10th, 2018 and it went well. I depend on my right eye most because I have lazy eye in the left one. I deeply appreciate all of your prayers and thoughts for us.

In all of this, in December, we get so busy trying to get ready for the Christmas benevolence gift distribution. I deeply appreciated Josephine my wife and Brother Khalid and Brother Maher for their help. They did a great job to be able to get all stuff together and be ready three days before Christmas to give those in need. This year we helped 53 families. We give them can beans, sugar, rice, flour, fruits, canned baby milk and meat. Some, they live in a bad conditions, and we gave them blankets to keep them warm in this cold weather we have. As always, gifts are given with a note "This is a gift of love from brothers and sisters in the church of Christ who live far away from you, who do not know you, but they have love for you. This love is not only in words but is deeds, to help you." We were able to bring joy and love for them in times of need. They deeply appreciated your gift of love. Their faces tell how much they appreciated it. As a result of this work, we started a home bible study with one family, a mother and three children ages 14, 12, and 9 years old and several have asked for our Bible Correspondence Course. We are thankful to all of those who contributed for the Christmas Benevolence with their donations. They brought joy to the hearts of people far away and teach them the love of Jesus.

Our home bible studies are going well. We had encouragement from our home bible study in Bethlehem. We are studying the Book of Acts and it seems they enjoy the class as they are being involved in it and asked many questions about how the church began, and how they can become a Christian. We have an average of 7 in the class. In Beit Jalla

we had an average of 5 in one class and in another class we have 4 adults and 2 children. In our Beit Shour Bible Class we had 6. In Aboud we are still looking for a house to rent so people can freely come to the Bible class, since we were asked by landlord to leave one house, as we wrote before. We have about 12 in outdoor bible studies in Nablus. We enjoy our outdoor Bible class. The main issue I face with the class is that they have a hard time to accept God Has a Son. In every class they bring UP this question; "How can God have a Son?" Since they are all from Muslim back ground, they cannot accept this fact, because as they look at it, if you have a son you must have a wife and God does not have a wife. With patience and prayers we pray we can establish faith in their heart to accept this, not from us but from God who said 'This is my beloved son, you hear Him". In Zababdah, we enjoy our class. We had an average of 10 in the class and in worship on Sunday

Our Correspondence Bible Course has grown; in the last month we received about 32 new ones requesting to take the course.

Since, US President Donald Trump announced that the US officially recognizes Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, and that the American government will begin moving its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, each Friday the Palestinians youths get out into streets at the cities at intersection where are the Israeli checkpoints to protest by throwing stones on the Israeli soldiers. The Israeli soldiers shoot at them with tear gas and rubber bullets. I have cancelled our home Bible studies on Fridays because it is not safe to drive to them as people must pass these intersections to reach the classes.

The gates of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in occupied East Jerusalem were closed for three-days to protest of Israeli policies that church leaders said were for weakening Christian presence in Jerusalem. Some policies that were protested was a bill to allow The Israeli State to take over church properties leased to private companies. Leaders also protested plans by the Israeli government to begin imposing taxes on church properties. These all adversely affect all who go by "Christians".

May the peace of God that passed all understanding guide your hearts and your lives through Jesus Christ our Lord.

In Christ Love

Raji & Josephine Stephan