



August 2014 Newsletter

Dear Friends,

In all likelihood, each of you is aware of the most recent and continuing assaults on Gaza and the heart-breaking death and destruction with which Gazan families and friends presently live. The separation wall and the continuing occupation keep Palestinians and internationals separated from their families and friends in Gaza, making assistance, comfort and the solidarity of a shared presence impossible. This is not the first time and it



Ecumenical Accompaniers having lunch and discussion with Jean Zaru at her home

may not be the last, so we must ask ourselves what we are called to say, to do, to be at this moment...this moment which matters so much to so many.

Members and friends of Ramallah Friends Meeting have something life-giving to teach us.

We begin with the words of one of the younger Meeting members, Mai Zaru who recently wrote,

“...through Meeting and through worship I found that nothing is unbearable. So how can we spread love, peace, justice and equality in our community? How can we be non-violent in a violent world?”

“As I attend the Ramallah Monthly Meeting, I find the answers to all my questions and concerns. I get a sense of guidance and support as I search for myself and seek to help others. Most of the times a silent worship makes me realize that the answers are found within. And this is what the Meeting has taught me, to have a peaceful soul to be able to listen, forgive and love unconditionally...”

Yet the darkness does not overcome the Light. The Meeting was filled with many visitors in June, including Guilford College students who, in addition to deep learning and intense discussions with clerk Jean Zaru, were also doing much-needed work in the gardens and exterior. Two groups came to study the full range of issues and challenges: the InterFaith Peace Builders, led by Maia Carter and a Jewish colleague, and twenty-five students from University of Chicago led by Paul Parker and a Muslim colleague. Meetings for worship, hospitality, a meeting with AFSC- including lunch for a new Jerusalem-area director and frequent discussions at the rise of Meeting make for a full summer, a time that is usually much slower.

Beginning this Fall, Global Ministries of the Disciples of Christ and the United Church of Christ will be sponsoring a young woman to work on the Ramallah Friends Meeting website. She will work for three days a week with us for a year. One of the first “special projects” begins in October. For two months - through the end of November - Jasmine Piercy will be serving as Ramallah Friends Meeting’s second Friend in Residence. Jasmine is a member of Wellington Meeting in West Somerset Area Meeting (UK) and this will be her 7th time serving Friends in Palestine facilitating Quaker Voluntary Action projects. When she is not making the arrangements for the upcoming QVA delegation in October, Jasmine will be writing for the Friends of Ramallah Friends meeting newsletter, enriching Meeting for Worship and the fellowship that follows, participating in the discussions that emerge, meeting visitors with Clerk Jean Zaru and, perhaps most importantly, being in solidarity with Palestinian Friends.

This is particularly treasured these days when travel for Palestinians is severely restricted or prohibited but internationals may move freely and as settlements continue to press in toward Ramallah itself. Jasmine plans to leave the Ramallah Meeting at the end of November to attend the annual Peace and Service gathering in Brussels to which she will be able to bring other Friends a sense of “how things are” on the ground.

Your faithful support and an extraordinarily generous gift from Sweden Yearly Meeting is allowing us to plan a fund that will, to the degree possible, ensure that the Ramallah Friends Meeting and its programs will have a base line of sustenance for many years forward. Although summer appears to be a

quieter time for activities, there is much being planned for the Fall, and the Meeting continues to be a place where visitors, attenders, pilgrims and members learn how to live within conflict yet not become the conflict.

In faith,

Jean Zaru, Clerk RFM

Deb First, Clerk FRFMQ