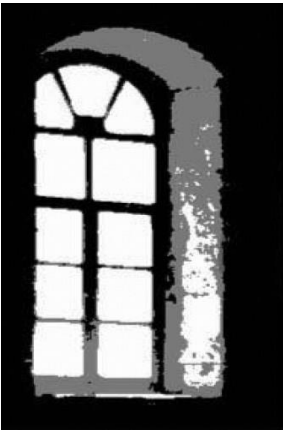


Ramallah Friends Meeting (Quakers)



Epistle to Friends Worldwide

February 2017

This second month of the year in Palestine is a time when the cold of winter begins to break. Between the hard stones which scatter the hillsides, life once dormant emerges once again. Within a few days, beautiful red poppies will carpet the surrounding fields as if to remind us that life abundant is always close by.



In this 2017 year, the wider Palestinian community will mark 50 years of military occupation and nearly 70 years since the beginning of the tragic displacement of the Palestinian people known as the *Nakhba*. Meanwhile, the people of Gaza, largely a refugee community themselves, are going on 10 plus years of an incapacitating and inhumane siege. As a consequence, four generations of Palestinians have now experienced displacement, daily hardship, the de-development of their society, and the denial of their basic rights.

The Ramallah Friends Meeting, formed in the early 1900's, has borne witness to this historical reality, sharing faithfully throughout the years both its sufferings and joys, by consistently offering an inclusive space for both spiritual nourishment and physical refuge. We, therefore, take this occasion to:

1. Recall our history of service, including the offering of emergency shelter and the schooling of children whose families were uprooted from their homes on the coastal plain because of the *Nakhba* in 1948;
2. Affirm our continued steadfast presence and ability to adapt our ministries throughout the past half century of a harsh military occupation and all its constraints;
3. Invite Friends and fellow sojourners worldwide to join us, as they are led, in non-cooperation with violent structures that deny freedom, equality and justice;
4. Commit ourselves to lay, in new and bold ways, an ever-stronger foundation, envisioning a continued relevant and vital presence in the heart of Ramallah; and
5. Express our deep appreciation to Jean Zaru as we mark the 30th year of her service as clerk of the Ramallah Friends Meeting while, at the same time, celebrating her continued involvement in the life of the Meeting.

Friends, in all manner, the Meeting stands at a new year waiting on the Spirit and eager to affirm life in its abundance by continuing to build a culture of peace and nonviolence, in a city and a region experiencing prolonged upheaval.

First Day Meeting for Worship continues at 10:30 in the morning in the historic Meetinghouse. The tradition of Mid-Week Meeting for Worship has been revived, fostering fellowship and offering additional opportunities for worship. The Meeting's gardens offer an oasis of greenery and solitude in a bustling city and chaotic world. The witness to the daily living of a theology of nonviolence continues to be faithfully shared with travelers, far and wide. In addition, essays, meditations and queries are regularly made available on our new website; and frequent updates may be found on our Facebook page.

Throughout the coming days and years, we seek to remain both steadfast and forward thinking as we affirm abundant life in the midst of a tumultuous reality; and thereby be reminded that the business of our lives is, "...to turn all treasures we possess into the channel of Universal love..." (John Woolman).

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