

# Friends of Ramallah Friends Meeting (Quakers)

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH RAMALLAH FRIENDS MEETING

November 2017



## Steering Committee

### Saleem Zaru

Middle East Yearly Meeting  
Clerk, Ramallah Friends Meeting

### Arlene Kelly

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting  
Clerk, Steering Committee

### Leila Barclay

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting  
Treasurer, Steering Committee

### Sa'ed Atshan

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

### Derek Brett

Switzerland Yearly Meeting

### Jan Caspers

German Yearly Meeting

### Patricia Cockrell

Britain Yearly Meeting

### Deborah First

New York Yearly Meeting

### Jean Zaru

Middle East Yearly Meeting

Dear Friends,

It is time for us, again, to be in touch and seek your support for Ramallah Friends Meeting (RFM) and its ministries. That support comes in several forms, each of which is essential, if the work and vision of the Meeting are to continue to grow and serve as a beacon of hope in a deeply troubled part of the world.

- ✎ Your prayers support us to be Spirit-led in all aspects of the work.
- ✎ When you share the story of the Meeting and how it has been a steady part of Friends presence in Ramallah for more than a century, you help widen the circle of support and our encouragement of one another.
- ✎ Your financial contribution is the concrete step that grows the ministries of the Meeting, allowing for a strengthening of the Worshiping Community and development of its capacity to respond to needs in the wider community.

In our last letter we spoke of Saleem Zaru transitioning to Clerk, and how that opens space for Jean to turn her full time and energy to teaching about the faith-base of nonviolence with the several hundred theologians, students and others who travel to Ramallah each year.

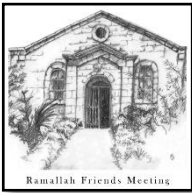
**Recently, the groundwork has been laid for new ministries to begin to unfold over the course of the coming 6-12 months – God willing.** These include: the employment of a Ministry Associate who will focus, among other duties, on developing a First Day School (Sunday School); the creation of programs to serve Ramallah area youth; a revived leadership role in the nearby Quaker preschool in Amari refugee camp; and the resumption of ties with Brumanna Friends Meeting in Lebanon, with the near future goal of reigniting Middle-East Yearly Meeting.

**Your support makes each of these critical ministries possible.** With your help, they will be the new reality on the ground. While Saleem's words on the next page bring alive the spirit and capacity of RFM's continuing witness, it is your generous gift that will put the flesh on the bones of that commitment. Will you join with us and be part of the way forward?

In Peace,

Arlene Kelly, FRFMQ Clerk

*p.s. You are invited to use **the enclosed card as a tool to tell the story** of Ramallah Friends Meeting. Might you post it, along with this letter, on a bulletin board or use it as part of a newsletter article? Other ideas? Contact me. I am happy to support your efforts.*



## A Friendly Word from Ramallah Friends Meeting...

***"Renewing our commitment for this season and this time."***

November 2017

In September my wife Carol and I, along with two of our adult children, travelled to Ramallah to attend the funeral of Nabeel Ajlouny. Nabeel was a lifelong member of the Ramallah Friends Meeting and my beloved father-in-law for some 30 years. It was a Friday and, with the shops mostly closed and sidewalks empty, the usual commotion in the center of Ramallah near the Meeting House seemed to pause while our family and friends gathered to celebrate Nabeel's life and to bid him farewell.



*Nabeel & Jean in Worship. Photo credit: Deena Zaru*

Two days later, I attended First Day Meeting for Worship. The large crowd that had gathered for the funeral was gone, save a small number of worshipers; and it was in that moment that the quiet grandeur of the space and the glory of its simplicity were revealed to me in a new way. Nabeel cherished his time with the Meeting and often spoke about feeling at peace there.

As we settled into the silence, I began to reflect on my own life as it relates to that simple, but magnificent space. Feeling drawn to the Meeting in a deeper, more renewed way, I was reminded what a blessing it was to have grown up in the Meeting. A blessing that has continued to mark, with a distinct purpose and meaning, the various stages of my life.

Words from the book of Ecclesiastes come to mind:

***"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven." (3:1)***

***"God has made everything beautiful in its time; God has put a sense of past and future in their hearts." (3:11)***

***"That which is, already has been; that which is to be, already is; and God seeks out what has gone by." (3:15)***



*Children engaged in "Godly Play" with members of the worshipping community on patio of RFM Center.*

Participating in Sunday school as a child and later volunteering as a teacher, led me to meet Carol and for that I am forever grateful. As young parents, we were blessed to attend Meeting with our three children. It was there that our children experienced family, extended relatives, friends, acquaintances and guests –all coming together to worship in silence. What a delightful gift!

Many other memories from the past 40 years were evoked, as well as the stark reminder that with the passing of each member of the Meeting our membership declined.

I was deep in thought that Sunday morning when suddenly I became aware of young children playing inside the Meeting House. Their laughter brought forward the awareness that **a new chapter in the life of the Meeting was unfolding**. At times, certainly, we all wonder what the future of the Meeting and Quaker presence in Palestine will exactly look like. Yet, as my mother, Jean, always says, *"We know not what the future holds, but only the One who holds it."*

Still we wonder, we wonder what the future holds most especially for the wider Palestinian community. Their suffering now spans generations and the impact of prolonged turmoil in the region runs deeper than one might imagine, if one stays only for a brief visit. As the days go on, the challenges mount, and our faith is tested again and again. With our small numbers and resources, we depend upon your encouragement.



*Mid-week Meeting at Saleem's home.*

**Where do we find, over the long haul, the spiritual sustenance required of us? Where are the wells from which to draw living water? How will we meet each season and time, under heaven? Perhaps it is precisely because the situation today is as discouraging and bleak as it is, that our response is more important than at any other time before.**



*Fellowship following First Day Worship.*

While the Meeting continues to:

- ✦ Serve as a spiritual home and grounding point, inclusive and open for all; and
- ✦ Tend to the historic building and grounds with love and care; and
- ✦ Offer its hallmark ministry of hospitality and education to visitors from across the globe...

**...we also lift up, in a new way, the Meeting's historical commitment to outreach in service of the Palestinian community –most especially refugees and children.** The Meeting sheltered some of the first refugee families who were displaced from their homes and fled to the hills of Ramallah some 70 years ago. *Today, our first step (of several) is to revive the Meeting's role in caring for the Quaker Play Centre in nearby Amari Refugee Camp.*

Even as we renew this commitment, we plan to phase in other initiatives focused on youth and the renewal of ties with Friends at Brummana Meeting in Lebanon.

Blessed be the children, all the children. The children of Palestine, throughout the Middle East and, yes, the young ones of Ramallah Meeting, who have now and throughout the years opened our eyes and hearts anew. May we nurture their growth in loving and peaceful ways and may we be reassured that, through doing so, all of what is meant to be, already is.

In a simple peace,

Saleem Zaru, Clerk  
Ramallah Friends Meeting



*The beautiful children of Amari Play Centre.*

***"Through worship and service, we strive to build a culture of peace and non-violence which radiates from the heart of Ramallah and around the world."***