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Middle East Yearly Meeting
Clerk, Ramallah Friends Meeting

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Philadelphia Yearly Meeting
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Central Atlantic Conference
United Church of Christ

Saleem Zaru

Middle East Yearly Meeting

Friends of Ramallah Friends Meeting (Quakers)

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH RAMALLAH FRIENDS MEETING

Thanksgiving 2015

Dear Friends,

In my first letter as Clerk of the Steering Committee of Friends of Ramallah Friends Meeting (Quaker) [FRFMQ], I reach out with my greetings and appreciation to each of you for your care and support of the ministries of Ramallah Friends Meeting (RFM). It is out of a sense of faithfulness and hope that I write – knowing that there are no guarantees of assured outcomes in these efforts, but also knowing that the unique contribution that RFM brings to the Palestinian community nurtures a culture of peace and nonviolence. What we can offer is a continuing presence and accompaniment of those who are in the midst of the struggle, day in and day out; we can offer our prayers and offer the material resources to support those on-going efforts.

There are many examples that we could lift up to illustrate the importance of that continuing presence, but let us share just one, spoken in the words of Mai Zaru, granddaughter of Jean Zaru, Presiding Clerk of the Meeting. Mai, who is in her sophomore year of college writes:

“When I’m asked to speak about what is special about my Meeting, I begin with the stones. I know, you must be wondering, what is so special about stones and why would stones make Meeting for Worship special?

“While it is true that our meetinghouse is made of stones just like any other place of worship in this land, they are not just massive rocks shaped for construction. These stones speak.

“They echo the strength of silence and the truth of testimony. They reflect the generosity of spirit from which countless talents have been shared over the years.

“These stones have seen the violence of 67 years of displacement and nearly half a century of a brutal occupation. And yet, they have also witnessed the joy of the marriage of young couples. With open doors, they’ve welcomed groups from around the world. They’ve even held up the roof against unforgiving weather.

“With steadfast continuity, the stones of the Ramallah Friends meetinghouse have offered both spiritual and physical shelter to refugees, sojourners, members and neighbors a like.

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“These beautiful, hand chiseled stones hold a collective account of over 100 years of stories of people worshipping the Spirit –a Spirit that binds us together and finds that of God in each of us. Most importantly, my Friends, they have kept a record of this small Meeting of steadfast Quakers and sojourning Friends.



“As a child growing up in Ramallah, I recall sitting in Meeting for Worship and examining each stone. They spoke to me and told me the stories of my ancestors, my grandparents, my friends, my neighbors and my people. Today, I sit in silence and can still hear the joy and laughter, the pain and misery, the celebration and loss. And with a clear mind and a still soul, I hear the guidance of the Spirit –leading beyond the current, unjust reality to one overpowered by the hope of equality, to a frozen moment vanquished by the warmth of the inner light, and to a unity wider than our misfortune.

“Moreover, I am provided with confidence to overcome times of despair and strength to continue steadfastly in nonviolent action with hope for a brighter future.

“We might be a small group of Quakers in Ramallah, yet this small group has welcomed thousands of travelers, peacemakers, activists, noble prize winners, and people of all faiths. We might be a minority, yet we’ve longed for nonviolence in one of the most violent places in the world; we’ve sheltered the homeless at our own expense, fed the hungry, welcomed groups into our homes, spoke of peace being the way to life, and reached out in cooperation with others.

“Each and every Friend is a living stone which comprises this beautiful Meeting. Indeed, each of you plays a vital role in the continuity of this 100 plus year Witness. I am grateful.”



Mai & Jean Zaru

“...if they are silent, the very stones will cry out.” – Luke 19:40

We invite you to continue to be a part of the accompaniment and support we offer to the ministries of Ramallah Friends Meeting through your prayers, your financial support and through your finding ways in your own community to bring deeper understanding of the roots of the struggle and its impact on the lives of both Palestinians and Israelis. In light of the recent increase in violent policies and events in the region, our support in building a culture of peace and nonviolence in Ramallah and beyond is more important than ever.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Arlene Kelly".

Arlene Kelly
Clerk, Steering Committee

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