

2021 Bethlehem Partnership Update

The Wisconsin UCC Conference Bethlehem Partnership continues to find ways of sharing the faith and lives of Palestinians Christians with our churches and the broader community. In the last couple years, the work of the Partnership has been limited due to the pandemic. We have been unable to make in person presentations, host travelers from Bethlehem, or travel to visit our Partners in Bethlehem.

However, thanks to our umbrella organization – Bright Stars of Bethlehem – we have continued to offer updates from Bethlehem with Rev. Mitri Raheb and virtual events featuring students at Dar al Kalima University College of Arts and Culture.

There have been several webinars that we publicized so congregations could stay connected and aware of how our partners are doing during the pandemic.:

*In the summer of 2020, Bright Stars of Bethlehem offered a 3 part series on how our friends in Palestine are “unlocking hope” in this “double lockdown” year when both the occupation and the Covid 19 quarantine has severely affected life for all Palestinians.

*Later that year, there was a virtual Gala event called “Be the Key” featuring Rev Mitri Raheb, Rick Steves, Rev. Nadia Bolz-Weber and several Dar al Kalima University College students. The purpose of the event was to raise awareness and funds for the college.

*In the summer of 2021, there were again a series of webinars with Mitri Raheb featuring students from both the main campus in Bethlehem and the adjunct campus in Gaza.

*And in September 2021, there was another virtual Gala celebration featuring not only Rev. Mitri and students from Dar al Kalima but US Representative Betty McCollum who spoke about her efforts to raise awareness in Congress of the plight of Palestinians and the US role in the Middle East. Again, the purpose of this event was to raise money for Palestinian students who hope to be the future leaders in their country.

We invite congregations to connect with us via Facebook on the Wisconsin site (“Bethlehem Partnership”) or go to the website of our Bright Stars of Bethlehem, www.brightstarsbethlehem.org. Hopefully, once the pandemic is under control, we may again be able to receive and send delegations of people who can share their experiences with our congregations. Meanwhile we ask you to pray for our Palestinian sisters and brothers who live out their faith with integrity and perseverance despite the limits and hardships of the occupation.

For more information about the Partnership, contact Nancy Baumgardner at nancybaumgardner@gmail.com .

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