

St Martha's House Bethlehem



Christian women attending St Martha's House in Bethlehem

The situation

Over the last 70 years the Christian population of the West Bank has steadily fallen, with many Christian families emigrating to escape the challenge of their daily lives. For those that remain increasing demands on their limited income makes caring for the elderly a significant problem. The absence of welfare systems such as state pensions, healthcare and social services significantly affects older members of the Christian community, and elderly women living alone are particularly vulnerable.

How does FHL help?

Since 2009 FHL has been pleased to support St Martha's House, the first day care centre for elderly women in Bethlehem. The House is open four days a week and provides support to poor and vulnerable elderly Christian women in Bethlehem, many of whom are widows living alone with no one to care for them. The House, staffed by Christians, creates a social environment where the women meet for companionship, a simple meal and mutual support. Without this facility, many of these elderly women would live a lonely and isolated existence. Over the past eight years FHL has contributed £240,000 to St Martha's House and annual support equates, on average, to £40,000.

What impact does FHL make?

FHL funding enables St Martha's House to enhance the quality of life for about 40 Christian women aged 65 years and over and provides respite to carers tending the needs of elderly relatives. Services include transportation to and from the women's homes, snacks and meals, dental and chiropody care, and basic medication. The staff are Christians providing a valuable employment opportunity for the local Christian community. Volunteers visit the House to provide specialised activities such as craft sessions, medical check-ups, exercise classes, bible and prayer groups.

An opportunity to engage with the 'Living Stones'

St Martha's House provides a unique opportunity for visiting pilgrims to connect with the "Living Stones" of the Holy Land and we always encourage pilgrimage organisers to make time in their itineraries to visit. Many of the women have experienced hardship, warfare and discrimination, so meeting their Christian brothers and sisters from around the world means a lot to them. In return, pilgrims always take a huge amount away from time spent at St Martha's House. Visits are always happy occasions where singing and dancing is enjoyed by all.

Adele's Story (day care resident at St Martha's House)



"I was born on 17th February 1943. I grew up in my father's modest house. I could not complete my studies. I married at the age of 18 and had six daughters and two sons. Two of my daughters were killed in the second intifada. I live now with my sick husband and I have no breadwinner since my children are married and busy coping with their own hard lives. I started to come to St. Martha's about two years ago. I feel happy to be there. We find a family atmosphere and forget our problems and sorrows. They take care of us as if we were their mothers."

"Friends of the Holy Land, to you, we give many thanks and much appreciation. Not only do you believe in us but you share our vision for the future. With your help, we will continue to make a difference to the Palestinian elderly women in our community."

Laila Asfoura – President, St Martha's House



Could you support St Martha's House?

Increased support would enable the House to extend the numbers of women visiting and to provide more and regular services. Do you know a group or individual who could make a monthly gift aided donation of £84? This would be enough to provide one month's support to one woman. Alternatively, a £20 monthly donation would provide one woman's meals at St Martha's House.

Financial donations can be made online by visiting www.friendsoftheholylan.org.uk and clicking on the DONATE NOW button, if you wish to support St Martha's House specifically please mark your donation 'St Martha's House'. Alternatively, a cheque payable to 'Friends of the Holy Land' can be sent to the address shown below. Standing order forms are available on our website under 'GET INVOLVED' on the 'Donate Money' page, or by contacting the office.

Volunteer with us: Volunteers are needed to help in our office in Kenilworth or to speak at events across the country, please let us know if you can help.

Contact:

Address: Friends of the Holy Land, Farmer Ward Road, Kenilworth, Warwickshire, CV8 2DH

Email: office@friendsoftheholylan.org.uk

Tel: 01926 512980