

Holy Land Bursary

Update on the children and work supported by Presbytery of Clyde 2026/2027

Thank you so much for your warm message, your continued prayers, and the generous support from the Presbytery for our students and their families.

Please accept my sincere apologies for the delay in replying. The start of the new academic year (2026–2027) has been exceptionally busy as we work to welcome our students back and ensure a smooth start for everyone despite the challenging circumstances.

Context of Crisis in the West Bank and East Jerusalem

Over the past few years, the devastating war in Gaza has cast a deep shadow across all parts of Palestine. The current economic and political landscape across the West Bank and East Jerusalem has been severely destabilized by this protracted crisis and its far-reaching ripple effects. The region is experiencing its deepest economic contraction in decades. Intensified military operations, near-total restrictions on movement, and the cutoff of access to labor markets have crippled the local economy. Unemployment has soared, pushing once-stable families into desperate financial straits. These severe socio-economic pressures directly jeopardize the ability of Palestinian families—including those supported by your scheme—to afford essential needs, particularly education.

Escalating Violence, Siege, and the Situation in Jerusalem & Ramallah

Beyond the economic collapse, the security situation has deteriorated sharply due to escalating settler violence, creating an environment of fear and dispossession. This systematic pressure is acutely felt in Christian-majority areas, including historic villages like Aboud, northwest of Ramallah, where harassment threatens the very foundations of the community. Furthermore, historic Christian centers—specifically Bethlehem, Beit Sahour, and Beit Jala—are increasingly isolated by tight checkpoints and closures, fragmenting communal life.

Regarding the situation in Jerusalem, the crisis concerning work permits for West Bank teachers has not been radically resolved; rather, it is currently being managed through temporary measures to prevent a total collapse of the academic year. At the start of September 2026, Israeli authorities abruptly refused to renew entry and work permits for over 70 educators commuting to private and Christian schools in East Jerusalem—a measure widely seen as part of ongoing pressure on Palestinian

educational institutions. Following comprehensive strikes, schools have managed to partially resume operations by heavily relying on local Jerusalemite staff to take on extra shifts and hiring temporary local substitutes. However, without a comprehensive policy reversal, these schools continue to operate under severe staffing shortages and continuous vulnerability. Furthermore, local reports indicate that Israeli authorities have explicitly informed Palestinian schools in Jerusalem that no new entry or work permits will be approved for teachers from the West Bank in the future.

Here in Ramallah, despite these overwhelming external pressures, the Arab Evangelical Episcopal School continues to operate fully and remains steadfast in its mission. We are doing everything possible to provide a stable, safe, and nurturing educational environment for our children during these dark times.

An Existential Threat to the Christian Presence in the Holy Land

This confluence of economic hardship, movement restrictions, and targeted pressure poses an existential threat to the survival of the indigenous Christian presence in the Holy Land, a community that has witnessed here for over two millennia. When families face crippling debt, joblessness, and constant uncertainty, emigration becomes a desperate recourse.

By supporting our school and the students detailed below, the Presbytery is not merely funding tuition; you are actively contributing to anchoring Christian families in their ancestral homeland, ensuring that the next generation can remain, thrive, and fulfill the 2,000-year-old mission of the Christian community in the birthplace of the faith.

Student Profiles & Progress Reports

Below is the detailed progress report and information regarding the students selected to receive the bursary funding for this academic year:

Ghazal Akram Hani (16 years old), 11th grade.

Ghazal is a very ambitious student. She aspires to pursue law and become a lawyer. She is a very helpful and high-achieving student. The father, Akram, is a dedicated member of the school staff, working as a maintenance employee, driver, and custodian with a monthly salary of \$800 (£597). The mother, Huda (44), is unemployed. The family supports six children: Jameela (26), the eldest

daughter, graduated from Birzeit University, unemployed and has been looking for a job for the last 12 months. Bisan (25) she also graduated from Birzeit with a certificate of English Literature; she works as sales women in a candy shop near Ramallah. Massad (22) unemployed and helping his father from time to time. Jawad (20) recently enrolled in Birzeit University to study interior design. Rawad (12) is the youngest son in the family and attends the 7th Grade at our school. Akram and his wife supplement their income by raising livestock and making cheese. The family's accumulated debt to the school from previous years exceeding (approximately \$25,000 = £18,659).

1- Celina Kh. Zaideh (12 years old), 7th grade.

The father, Khader (48), is an employee at the Coca-Cola factory in Ramallah, with a monthly salary of 3,000 Israeli Shekels (£723). The mother, Tania (44), works as a teacher's assistant at a local Kindergarten (KG). The family lives in an old house (two rooms) in the old city of Ramallah. The father has a son, Bisharah (20 years old), from a previous marriage. Bisharah graduated from our school three years ago but cannot afford to attend university, and remains unemployed while actively seeking work. Bisharah and Celina live in the same room with no privacy at all. The family also supports the paternal grandmother, who lives nearby. The family is in critical need of comprehensive financial support.

2- Dimitri Mousa Khoury:

Dimitri (15 years old) is a well-liked and highly cooperative student. He is loved by his peers and teachers; he is in the 10th grade. Following the loss of his father approximately 10 years ago, he works diligently to meet community expectations as the 'man of the family'.

The mother, Nisreen (48 years), works as a secretary for the Continuous Education Program at Birzeit University. Nisreen is a breast cancer survivor. She has completed chemotherapy, and the family is hopeful for her continued health. Dimitri has three older sisters. The sisters are: Miral (28 years), a Birzeit University graduate who is married; Taleen (26 years), who also graduated from

Birzeit University and is currently working at CARE International; and Layyar (20 years), is enrolled in Birzeit University

3- Merette and Marla George Khnouf (7 years):

Merette and Marla are twin sisters attending the 2nd grade. Marla faces certain health and developmental challenges that necessitate special attention. Consequently, the teachers and parents have agreed that she requires a dedicated and around the clock teaching assistant to shadow her and provide focused support during classes. The father, George (in his late-forties), is unemployed due to severe illness and disability. He has been diagnosed with cancer and is undergoing intensive medication and treatment. George, an alumnus of our school (graduated over 25 years ago), is a double amputee. He lost his first leg in a school bus accident during his early childhood, and sadly lost his second leg a few years ago due to cancer-related complications, diabetes, and other serious health issues. The mother, Hiba Shaheen (early forties), is the family's sole source of income, employed at BCI Company. Her salary is insufficient to cover the family's needs. Over 85% of her income is dedicated to repaying a bank mortgage loan.

Thank you once again to you, Tina, and everyone at the Presbytery for standing by our school, our children, and our community.

With warm regards and many blessings,

Najeh

Arab Evangelical Episcopal School - Ramallah