



**BETHLEHEM UNIVERSITY**

جامعة بيت لحم

Office of the Vice President for Development  
مكتب نذوب الرنيس للتطوير

### **Bethlehem University Gaza Student Initiative**

March – April 2009

From the founding of Bethlehem University as the first university established in the West Bank until the present day, there are 438 students and graduates from Gaza among the 10,816 graduates of Bethlehem University. During the past eight or so years the Israeli military travel restrictions have prevented university aged Palestinians in Gaza from coming Bethlehem University in the West Bank part of Palestine to pursue their education – and so the number of students from Gaza coming to Bethlehem University has come to a “stand still.” This we are committed to changing – with your help and support! ***Will you join us in support of the right to education for the people of Gaza?***

Even though students from Gaza have been denied permission to come to Bethlehem University, on 27 March 2008 with the cooperation of the Islamic University in Gaza City, 10 students from Gaza graduated from Bethlehem University via video conference facility. These students from Gaza began their studies in August 2003 and were never given permission from Israeli authorities to step foot on the campus of Bethlehem University – even after petitions to the Israeli courts were pursued. The students earned their degree from Bethlehem University in occupational therapy through the cooperation of the Islamic University in Gaza City with Bethlehem University. It was not the intent of anyone that this four year degree program would have been offered using a combination of video conferencing and expatriate faculty from Bethlehem University going to Gaza. The fact that travel permissions were being delayed and ultimately denied did not prevent Bethlehem University from fulfilling its commitment offer the occupational therapy bachelors degree to these ten students – an academic and professional program much needed in Gaza but not available in any Gaza university. With funding support from many international agencies and individuals and with the cooperation of our sister Palestinian university in Gaza City, the students graduated (a bit later than anticipated) – but they graduated – via video conferencing. For more information: [http://www.bethlehem.edu/archives/2008/2008\\_031.shtml](http://www.bethlehem.edu/archives/2008/2008_031.shtml)

Bethlehem University is once more and with renewed commitment engaged in a “Gaza Student Initiative” that is designed to provide students from Gaza their right to education in Palestine: the opportunity to actually come to Bethlehem University to earn their university degree in a Palestinian university among their sisters and brother Palestinians from the West Bank. To achieve this goal, Bethlehem University is seeking the necessary “travel permissions” from the Israeli authorities for the students from Gaza to come to the West Bank (another part of Palestine) to enroll in Bethlehem University so they can then return to Gaza to serve there. Bethlehem University is also seeking funding to assist in covering the costs associated with this initiative (e.g., cost of education, transportation, housing accommodations, food, textbooks, counseling and coordination, etc).

Given that the mission statement of Bethlehem University calls us “to provide quality higher education to the people of Palestine” and reminds us that the “University emphasizes excellence in academic programs and the development of students as committed people prepared to assume leading positions in society,” this Gaza Student Initiative is a vital priority and of great significance to Bethlehem University as the premier Palestinian university, the first Palestinian university established in the West Bank. It is a humanitarian issue, a matter of defending the right to education and the freedom of movement within one’s own country. ***Will you join with us and in a very real and tangible way bridge whatever gap may exit between and among Palestinians in Gaza and Palestinians in the West Bank?***

To enhance the educational service of the people of Palestine provided by Bethlehem University and to contribute even more to the efforts of justice and peace, Bethlehem University seeks your assistance:

1. **in securing the travel permissions** from Gaza to Bethlehem and/or
2. **with funding support** (a gift of \$10,000 per student per year is needed for assistance with travel, housing, food, books, education, counseling and support, etc: meaning that \$40,000 in total is needed for the four year bachelors degree) and/or
3. **in publicizing this initiative** in the public media and among churches and mosques.

This Bethlehem University Gaza Student Initiative is an opportunity:

- for the Palestinian people from Gaza to ***take a rest and seek healing*** from the terrible situation currently in Gaza while still ***remaining in Palestine,***
- for the Palestinian people from Gaza to ***pursue a quality university education*** in Palestine at the premier Palestinian university founded in the West Bank ***among their sister and brother Palestinians from the West Bank,***
- for the Palestinian people from Gaza to ***develop positive personal friendships and eventual professional relationships*** among and with the Palestinians from the West Bank as they live and study side-by-side for four years,
- for the Palestinian people from the West Bank to ***engage with and support*** their Palestinian sisters and brothers from Gaza, and
- **for people of good will from the world over to contribute to justice and peace in the Middle East.**

Founded in 1973 as the first university in the West Bank, Bethlehem University traces its roots in Palestine to 1893 when the De La Salle Frerés opened schools in Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Jaffa, Nazareth, Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, and Egypt. Bethlehem University is a founding member of the Palestinian Council for Higher Education and the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education. As the premier Palestinian university, Bethlehem University is a member of the Association of Arab Universities, International Federation of Catholic Universities, and Lasallian Association of Colleges and Universities and currently enrolls more than 4,100 students (two-thirds women, two-thirds Muslim, more than 6% from refugee camps) in its undergraduate, master, higher and professional diploma, and certificate programs in the Arts, Business Administration, Education, Nursing, Science, Hotel Management and Tourism, and Institute for Community Partnership.

Thankfully faculty and students at the University of Glasgow in Scotland and at Saint Mary's University in Minnesota, USA have already pledged their support in seeking funds to support this project. Additionally some private individuals in the UK and USA have contributed to this project.

We heard of possible scholarships being available for Palestinians through the US State Department when Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited the region, made inquiries to the US Consulate Office in Jerusalem to see if this initiative would qualify, but have not yet heard if this might be so.

If you are interested and able to support this project – or if you have and questions about this project – or if you have any "leads" as to who might be interested in supporting this project and with whom we should follow-up, please let contact Brother Jack Curran, FSC, PhD, Vice President for Development:

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Donations made payable to "Bethlehem University"  
are USA Tax deductible # 22-2997011.

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Thank you ... and God bless you!



# BETHLEHEM UNIVERSITY IN THE HOLY LAND

## Easter 2009 Gift Designation Form

Yes, I'd like to support Bethlehem University with an Easter Gift. Please accept my donation (check / cheque made payable to **"Bethlehem University"**) along with my prayers.

___ \$50	___ \$200	___ \$350	___ \$500	___ \$1,000	___ \$ _____
___ €50	___ €200	___ €350	___ €500	___ €1,000	___ € _____
___ £50	___ £200	___ £350	___ £500	___ £1,000	___ £ _____

Please apply my gift:    \_\_\_ to support the Gaza Student Initiative  
                                      \_\_\_ to support whatever need is greatest at the University  
                                      \_\_\_ to assist students with special needs  
                                      \_\_\_ to support students who work while attending classes  
                                      \_\_\_ to help purchase science laboratory equipment and materials  
                                      \_\_\_ to support student retreats and leadership training activities  
                                      \_\_\_ to establish a named annual scholarship (\$3,600 per year) in honor of

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Donor (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR PRAYERS AND SUPPORT!  
 YES, CHRIST IS RISEN – AND THERE IS REASON FOR REJOICING!**