

Hallelujah Moment from Palestine: "The Bee Hive Project"

By Janet Lahr Lewis

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Buena Vista United Methodist congregation in California.

Photo: BVUMC

For almost a year, I have been working on a community development project with a committee in the village of Wadi Foquin outside Bethlehem and a group from the Buena Vista United Methodist Church (BVUMC) in Alameda, California. "The Bee Hive Project" will purchase beehives, train local people as beekeepers, and sell honey so that needy families in Wadi Foquin will have incomes.

Buena Vista Church is helping to purchase the hives. At the end of August, the first gift arrived, enough to buy five beehives.

The project brings hope to the local people and encourages poor Palestinian families to stay in their homes rather than emigrate. It will also create a funnel for information about the illegal occupation of the area by Israeli forces, the displacement of

Palestinians, the violations of international law, and Israeli noncompliance with UN resolutions. Perhaps it will generate interest in the region and, in time, enable advocacy which would not otherwise take place.

Recently Buena Vista Church, a predominantly Asian-American congregation, held a project kick-off on "Bee Hive Sunday." Worship included a slide show and a prayer ritual in which messages for the people of Wadi Foquin were written on origami bees. There was a special offering and an after-worship lunch with questions and answers about the mission partnership.

All generations in the Buena Vista congregation are learning to be advocates for peace with justice, not only in Palestine and Israel but in other areas of the world. The church will send a group in January 2010 to spend a significant amount of time in Wadi Foquin, meeting the people and learning about the village, the culture, and the conflict, while building lasting relationships.

The Beehive Project is an example of how a congregation can advocate for justice while helping to bring hope and encouragement to those who live under occupation.

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Hallelujah Moments

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