

**Bishop Mark will celebrate Mass for the Christians of the Holy Land
28 Feb 2021 10.00 am – live streamed from Plymouth Cathedral**

Dear Benefactors and Friends

Spring is coming! This newsletter is to thank you, and to let you know what we've been doing with the support you've given us. We kept going through the lockdowns in 2020 and 2021 with our core mission of education and emergency help to the Christians in Bethlehem and Jordan. We have a gallery of memories for you to look at on the home page of the website: www.5gc.org/home



In Bethlehem we sent funds to Sr Maria Ronces for the *Hogar Niño Dios* for the children abandoned or in grave need. We sent funds to Fr Rami, Church of the Nativity, for his team to deliver survival vouchers for food, medicines and electricity to parishioners.

In Madaba (Jordan) we helped Iraqi refugee friends with emergency medical aid, and emergency food boxes in May, July and December.

Education for adult Iraqi refugees. We moved English classes online when lockdown hit; and in March, when the Cambridge School in Madaba closed, we turned the flat into a Covid safe space. This meant their tutor at Cambridge (Miss Sam) could carry on, taking care of everyone and all the teaching.

The British Council cancelled exams in June and rather than waste their work and disappoint students we changed to the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), a highly regarded qualification in language proficiency for migration, study and work. Three students took the B1 Life Skills and one the Academic exam, and all passed with merit. Sam has since added two new classes for adult beginners: one male, one female. All classes take place in the flat, and the Leaven Secular Institute gave us a 55" TV screen to enhance teaching and learning.



In Jordan we added new sessions on Zoom taught from the UK

IT courses: The intermediate students had two x 6-week courses and gained first-level certificates in Word and Excel - a gift from Barbara (Abingdon) of her time and expertise, using laptops donated by 5GC sponsors and individual benefactors.

Parenting Classes, Mindfulness and Kids Club: Children are suffering the effects of school closure, taking lessons on parents' mobiles 4 hours a day and being confined 24/7. They live in crowded flats with nowhere to play. Parents cannot risk children getting ill, they have no money for medicines. The parents, especially the mothers, are exhausted, distraught and stressed. Our Consultant Psychologist Advisor is facilitating twelve sessions to help parents understand how to manage their children's behaviour particularly during Covid-19. Two additional activities are running, the first, **Mindfulness**, for the mothers, given by Joanna (MSc psychology) on relaxation, breathing and living in the present moment. The second, **Kids Club** (up to 10 years), is run by our students Fada, Rivin and Karmen, monitored by Sam and trustees. The children can safely be out of the house mixing in a small group for two hours every Sunday morning for English, exercises, puzzles, games and stories.



All has been possible thanks to the grace of God and your support. In Bethlehem Fr Rami and Bethlehem colleagues keep us in touch with how things are, and our volunteer team in Jordan do the same. The Jordan team are our English students who stepped up to the plate during the curfews, checking the database of refugee families to ensure that food boxes went to the right place and in the right amounts, and choosing and packing the boxes for the Iraqi community. In December we had 320 persons living in 80 households. That's 108 food boxes with food for a fortnight. Funds were provided by our "Loaves & Fishes" appeal and the Madaba parish priest. See comment and photos on the May distribution "Masked men of Madaba". www.5gc.org/blog

*Looking forward - please could you help us keep going?
Current students need sponsors for 2021*

- 1 **we give** English training to qualify for entry to an English-speaking country
- 2 **we give** one-to-one computer training for certificates of proficiency
- 3 **we lay** the foundation for tertiary and vocational education

***It costs us £800.00 or £65.00 a month per student for a year
Could you "share a student" for a year, meaning two people paying
£400 or four people paying £200?***



Sam with Lena (now in Australia)



Our grave and urgent concern is teaching English to the Iraqi Christian refugees in order to help them have a sustainable new start in life.

- The world has moved on from the Iraqi crisis, and they have been largely forgotten.
- As official UN asylum seekers in transit, awaiting re-settlement, they are excluded from full life in Jordan. That means living in poverty, not allowed to work, and unable to move.
- Our personal engagement and the programmes we offer give them dignity and purpose, helping them to focus on achievable goals and their hoped-for future.
- They tell us how much it means to be in touch with people in the UK who care about them, closer than family. **Photos of the current students** are on the website and we have a bio from each of them for their potential sponsors www.5gc.org/students

We are speaking of young adults like Rivin (24), Fada (20) and Karmen (19) pictured here. Like all our Iraqi refugee friends, their brave smiles belie the horrors and trauma they and their families have been through. (see www.5gc.org/about). Over the years we have seen how the benefit

from one adult in a refugee family who learns English and trains for work can cascade down to as many as ten members of the family group. Already we see admiration for the students spreading through the Iraqi community, building their self-esteem and giving encouragement to others.

Salaam has been in Australia for over a year. His English was very good but he had no qualifications on paper. Repeatedly he reminds us that Iraqis arriving without an English qualification are in for a culture shock, disappointment and depression. He urges us (and them) to remember that the greatest gifts we can offer them in preparing for their new lives are English, IT and guidance on adjusting to life in a Western culture.

Looking forward - we also need emergency funding for food and medicines

The empty city of Bethlehem is still the place of Christ's birth, and Jordan is still the safest country in the Middle East. Pilgrims will be back. But in the meantime, it is bleak. People need to eat, need medicines and to see doctors. We save for these emergencies, and to help families overlooked or falling through the net of the big charities.

Sadly, we don't know when we can return to the Middle East in person, yet we remain confident in the efficiency and dedication of the Iraqi student team who have taken ownership and are running our projects for us. We are daily in touch from Devon, and Trustees and Advisors in the UK give their support via Zoom meetings, emails and Messenger.

We'll sign off for now and thank you again for making it all possible, and do please get in touch direct or via the website if you'd like to know more. God bless, and thanks again

5th Gospel Christians News Team - Della, Judy, Jane and Margaret

PS if you prefer us not to contact you with news, please drop us a line to judy@5gc.org