

## *Sabeel Snapshots Of our May Activities*

May 2006

Long after Easter celebrations are over in the land of the Resurrection, the greeting, *al-Masih Qam, Haqqan Qam* (Christ is Risen, He is risen indeed!) resonates through Ascension and Pentecost. The colorful celebrations and rich liturgies of the season manage to drive back the facts on the ground of continuous discord, suffering and injustice. For a short while, people attempt to live a normal life, but it is not an easy task when there is no political or economical stability, no security or prosperity and... little hope. Sabeel's local programs try to help in alleviating the burden of despair.

### COMMUNITY-BUILDING

During Holy Week, Sabeel encouraged the local community to experience the suffering of the Anata Secondary Boys School. On

April 12, despite miserable weather that forced many to stay at home, a courageous group visited this new station of the cross in the lives of the Palestinians. With disbelief, they looked upon the 8 foot wall, in the middle of the children's playground, violating

the rights of 725 students and making half of their playground unusable! Because of the bad weather, special prayers for breaking down the wall were held at the Sabeel Center.

Bishop Atallah Hanna of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate offered the homily.



**The Open Forum** – Currently, the Open Forum is in the midst of a series on pastors and congregations. The previous "Snapshots" described the first meeting of this series, which focused on the role and responsibilities of the congregation as the "flock". In the second of the series, the forum discussed the traits and characteristics of a good leader/spiritual shepherd as explored in scripture readings.

Because the gathering, held on April 25, closely followed Orthodox Easter, the audience was smaller than usual, but the discussion was very fruitful.

## CLERGY

On April 28, 11 clergy from Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant denominations met in Bethlehem. The Rev. Naim Ateek began the meeting by thanking the Franciscans at St. Catherine's Nativity Church for hosting the event. Fr. Francois Maria presented a Bible study on Luke 24:13-35. Rev. Husam Naom from the Episcopal Church gave a study on the history of the Anglican Church in



Palestine, followed by a good discussion. To end the meeting, the ecumenical group of clergy shared lunch with the Franciscan monks at St. Catherine's.

## YOUTH

On April 9, teenagers from Jerusalem and Beit Sahour met in Beit Sahour, the traditional place of the fields where the shepherds heard of the birth of Jesus. Jacqueline Sfeir, of



the Madad Center, used pictures to lead an activity that explored the youth's aspirations. She asked each person to choose a picture that spoke to them, and then asked why each chose the one they did. Several young people chose pictures of the sea, even though some had never been to the ocean. After this activity, the group discussed programs that they would like Sabeel to offer. The Orthodox committee in Beit Sahour coordinated the event with Sabeel.

## INTERNATIONAL

Sabeel is pleased to continue to host and speak to many tour groups that visit Jerusalem from around the world. In April, we greeted more than 150 people from Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The groups included:

- a Holy Land Trust group from the US,
- a United Methodist group led by Mr. and Mrs. Caldwell,
- two Mennonite Central Committee delegations,
- a Fact Finding Mission led by Dr. Frederic Bush,
- a group from CHARIS Ecumenical Center and Concordia College,
- a group from the UK led by Dominic Barrington,
- a Tantur Ecumenical Institute group of Anglican, Methodist, and Reform Ministers,
- a group from the UK led by Canon John Salter of Guilford.

In addition to informing international groups about our mission and programs at Sabeel, we also discussed the past and current situation in Palestine and Israel, and encouraged people to become involved in our International Friends of Sabeel Chapters in their home communities.

**PLEASE CHECK OUR WEBSITE, [www.sabeel.org](http://www.sabeel.org), for current information regarding our two upcoming conferences:**

**1st International Young Adult Conference:**

*Together: Facing Challenges...Finding Hope*

July 26 - August 6, 2006 and

**6<sup>th</sup> International Sabeel Conference:**

*The Forgotten Faithful: A Window into the Life and Witness of Christians in the Holy Land*  
November 2-9, 2006.

## **NAZARETH**

**A Wet Visit to Jericho** - On April 2, 2006, 43 excited Christians from Nazareth journeyed through rainy weather to visit Jericho. The heavy rain on that day was a happy event for the people of Jericho and added fun to the visit. The group split in two, one group worshipped with the Orthodox Church and the second group worshipped with the Roman Catholic Church across the street. Afterwards, they met the priests and the local people to discuss the situation and life of Christians in Jericho. Rev. Naim joined the group for a visit to the Coptic church and lead a spiritual devotion about Lent. Afterwards, the group visited the Jericho YWCA and enjoyed a bit of shopping. For the group from Nazareth, the experience of worship and fellowship with the Christians of Jericho was worth the floods and the bad weather on their trip home.

**Reflecting on the Suffering of Christ** - On April 7, the young adult group participated in an Easter Tour at Nazareth Village. The walk through the Village encouraged the young adults to reflect on Jesus' suffering by taking them back to the time of Jesus. The group then met at the garden near the Sabeel Nazareth office, where they had a great discussion and fellowship.

## ***IFOS Snapshots***

### ***This month: Friends of Sabeel – AUSTRALIA***

The 2005 annual meeting saw a change of leadership for FOSAU with Ray Barraclough retiring from his role as the inaugural president, and Greg Jenks succeeding him. Ray continues to serve on the committee of management and his contributions are greatly appreciated. We were delighted to have Tim Costello, CEO of World Vision Australia address the FOSAU annual meeting. Tim is a patron of FOSAU and very highly regarded in the wider community here in Australia.

FOSAU has formed a partnership with the Nazareth branch of Sabeel. This provides our members with a specific focus for their activities, and also gives the Sabeel members in Nazareth a sense of being supported by friends from the other side of the world. During December and January FOSAU members raised US\$1,000 to assist the Nazareth Sabeel branch in upgrading its computer and email facilities.

The recent extended screening of "Paradise Now" in local cinemas provided many opportunities for the Palestinian experience to be discussed with family members and work colleagues. Brisbane members of FOSAU hosted a special screening of the film, followed by a discussion session.

Both Ray Barraclough and Greg Jenks have been appointed to the Australian Jewish-Anglican Dialogue group. This group recently had its first session, meeting at the Great Synagogue in Sydney. While the focus of the dialogue is relations between the two faith communities in Australia, there have already been opportunities for significant discussions about the situation in Israel and Palestine as a matter that affects both our communities.

National church leaders, many of whom are patrons of FOSAU, have been briefed on developments relating to the MRI campaign, and especially after the vote by the Church of England General Synod to divest from companies providing support for the occupation of Palestinian land or the construction of the Separation Wall.

Plans are underway for a group of FOSAU members to attend the Sixth Sabeel Conference in November 2006.

*- Greg Jenks*