



New Year's Greetings from Ma'an lil-Hayat / L'Arche Bethlehem



Dear Friends,

The past year has been one of discovery for all of us at Ma'an lil-Hayat (Together for Life). We're discovering that the three key words that summarize the mission of L'Arche all over the world aren't just words. **Relationship, transformation, and sign** are all about life: about experiencing what it means to receive life, to give life, and to share life, sometimes in circumstances that seem to be devoid of life.

Our friendships with each other and with our faithful volunteers and close friends are the glue that holds us together as a community. We've had many opportunities to celebrate and deepen these relationships. They have transformed us into more joyful, more hopeful, more courageous, more compassionate human beings who have a mission to help create a more human society.

We are deeply grateful for the tremendous generosity of our numerous partners, donors, and friends. Your visits, prayers, messages of solidarity, and financial support enable us to continue. We look forward to making 2017 a year to share our mission in ever more creative ways with those around us.

◆◆ Breaking News ◆◆

- ◆ Ma'an lil-Hayat Bethlehem has opened a **second day program** in the village of Dar Salah! (Details on page 2.)
- ◆ The L'Arche International Stewardship Board has approved Ma'an lil-Hayat's move from project status to **probationary community!** The next step in the journey toward permanent membership in the Federation. We will be celebrated at the L'Arche Federation Assembly in Belfast in June.
- ◆ The Palestinian Ministry of Interior has **approved the registration** of Ma'an lil-Hayat as a local organization.



Celebrations – birthdays in particular – remind us that gratitude and joy are at the heart of our life together.



The Opening of Ma'an lil-Hayat/Dar Salah



In response to our growing awareness of the needs of people with disabilities, we opened a second day program in September in a village on the outskirts of Bethlehem. Ma'an lil-Hayat/Dar Salah was founded by four long-term core members (people with intellectual disabilities) and two assistants from Ma'an Bethlehem: Hilmi, Yasmine, Maha, Fatmeh, Amira, and Yousef. Four additional core members have been welcomed: Joumana, Hadeel, Razan, and Intissar, as well as a third assistant, Muna. When the village council of Dar Salah learned that we were hoping to begin a project in the village, the head of the council offered us a recently renovated house to use rent-free for the next few years. We are grateful to the village council as well as to the founders of Ma'an Dar Salah for their generosity!



Our new wool-carding machine will help us improve the quality of our products and to enhance efficiency and production. (Notice our old machine, bottom-right. Needless to say, Ahmad is happy!)

Friends we've said goodbye to with sad but very grateful hearts



Sunbul Al-Asmar



Amal Naasan



Maha I'maya



Kholoud and Jane



Getting ready to join other organizations to celebrate International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

Ma'an lil-Hayat Facts 2016

- ◆ Five new core members (people with disabilities) were welcomed at Ma'an Bethlehem, and four at Ma'an Dar Salah, bringing to 28 the total number of core members.
- ◆ We participated in a number of shared events/outings with other local organizations, universities, and church youth groups.
- ◆ We welcomed the community of L'Arche from Beauvais, France, to help celebrate their 10th anniversary.
- ◆ We welcomed an average of three visits per week - individuals and groups, local and international - for a total of more than 1,000 visitors during the year.



A day of shared joy with the community of L'Arche Beauvais, who were here on pilgrimage to celebrate their 10th anniversary.

- ◆ We sold more than 15,000 sheep (!), almost 3,000 Nativity scenes, and more than 900 angels, in addition to numerous other items.
- ◆ Revenue from product sales covered approximately 50% of our running costs.
- ◆ Four assistants and one board member



participated in various L'Arche formation sessions and retreats in France, Belgium, and Poland.

◆ Links with our friends at the malja (institution) in Bethany continue. This unique community of L'Arche reminds us of our roots and calls us to ever-more-creative ways to live relationships of faithfulness. Visits to the malja have become part of our weekly routine at Ma'an Bethlehem and Ma'an Dar Salah.

◆ We acquired a new wool-carding machine!
 ◆ We have become one of the "preferred practicum placements" for local university students, and worked with more than 40 students at various times this year.

- ◆ Our participation in numerous local Christmas bazaars has been a perfect marketing tool.
- ◆ One of our volunteers is a musician who comes every week to transport us into the world of music.
- ◆ In what's becoming an annual event, we went on holiday in Tabgha on the Sea of Galilee in September. Including friends and volunteers, we were more than 40 people! Every year there's a high level of stress before the holiday trip as we wait to hear whether we have been granted permission to leave Bethlehem.



Intissar and Mahera – the Sea of Galilee



Shukri with his favorite actor, Khaled Al-Maso



Kholoud at a Christmas bazaar.

Even in the darkest of situations, light shines!

One of our long-term core members, Sana, was diagnosed in April with a cancer that had metastasized. The prognosis was not good. Sana had to undergo numerous tests, and then she began a grueling routine of chemotherapy. Our life together at Ma'an means that we try our best to help carry each other's burdens and provide as much support as possible to the families of core members. Almost immediately upon hearing about Sana's diagnosis, one of our faithful international volunteers took it upon herself to launch a "crowdfunding website" to help cover some of the expenses related to Sana's situation. Within a very short time, an admirable sum was raised. A bright light in the midst of darkness!



As Sana went through chemotherapy for six months, she was accompanied by an assistant from Ma'an, Amal. Almost immediately after Sana began her regular and frequent chemotherapy sessions, the hospital ward was transformed. Sana and Amal created an atmosphere of joy in a place where little but despair exists. Their friendship brought a certain gentleness to the harsh hospital reality. During each session, Sana spoke with almost everyone there - the patients, the nurses, those who accompanied the patients. She had a kind or funny or comforting word or gesture for each one. By the time she finished treatment, she had created a space of healing and a network of friends. A bright light in the midst of darkness!

After taking a bit of time to rest, Sana, Amal, and everyone at Ma'an began to ask how we could continue to bringing a spirit of joy to the chemotherapy ward. Given that the hospital does not provide snacks for the patients, we decided that once a week, we would make sandwiches and prepare fruit and drinks to offer to the patients and those who accompany them. Although we've only just begun, it's clear that this is a creative way to share our mission and bring joy to others. A VERY bright light in the midst of darkness!

*With great sadness, we share the news that **Maha Ibrahim Mahmoud T'maya**, one of the founders of Ma'an lil-Hayat/L'Arche Bethlehem, passed away on January 1, 2017, after an illness. Maha's very gentle yet strong spirit enabled her to face numerous challenges throughout the 26 years of her life. Always concerned about the well-being of others, Maha was one of the quiet builders of community, making sure that friends, visitors, and volunteers always experienced a genuine sense of welcome and belonging.*

A courageous and wise woman, Maha wasn't afraid to take risks if she felt that she could contribute to something important. As recently as September 2016, Maha proudly offered to be a founding member of Ma'an lil-Hayat (Dar Salah), the newest L'Arche project in Palestine. Dar Salah, a small village about 15 minutes from the center of Bethlehem, was Maha's home village, and she enthusiastically accepted to share in the responsibility of starting this new project. Maha reminded us that faithful friendship is the center of our life together at Ma'an lil-Hayat, and we are grateful! May she rest in peace, and may her spirit continue to be a blessing for all of us.



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