

The International Center Of Bethlehem Annual Report 1997

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Greetings to all from Bethlehem and the International Center of Bethlehem.

In its second year of operation, the International Center of Bethlehem has matured in terms of its programs and outreach to both the local and the international communities. The Center, although young in age, has become one of the most important cultural centers in the Bethlehem area. Compared to last year's 12,281 individuals whom we served, this year we are happy to report that more than 20,000 men, women, and children participated in our programs. We expect that this number will increase as the year 2000 approaches.



The activities that the Center undertook in 1997 varied. These activities included art workshops, musical performances, dancing, lectures, training courses, workshops for teachers, conferences, organizing tours, as well as many other activities.

The ages of those who benefited from our services ranged from 5 to 80 years. We expect to continue and expand our existing programs for the year 1998.

Our vision for Bethlehem and Palestine is embodied in our biggest project so far, namely the **Dar al-Kalima Academy** for Interreligious and Intercultural Studies. The Academy, which is our contribution to the **Bethlehem 2000** project, is an educational institution that will promote intercultural dialogue, contextual theology, music and art. It is our belief that this Academy will be an institution that will empower our people to face the challenges of the twenty-first century, since we believe that no development in Palestine is possible without human resources development.

The dynamism and commitment of the Center's staff has made the success of our work possible. I thank them all. Also, I would like to thank our board members, and the friends of the Center, both local and international. Their unfailing support for our endeavor has made our dream come true. Our belief was and remains that whenever there is vision, will, and faith, combined with the right resources, we as humans can move mountains.

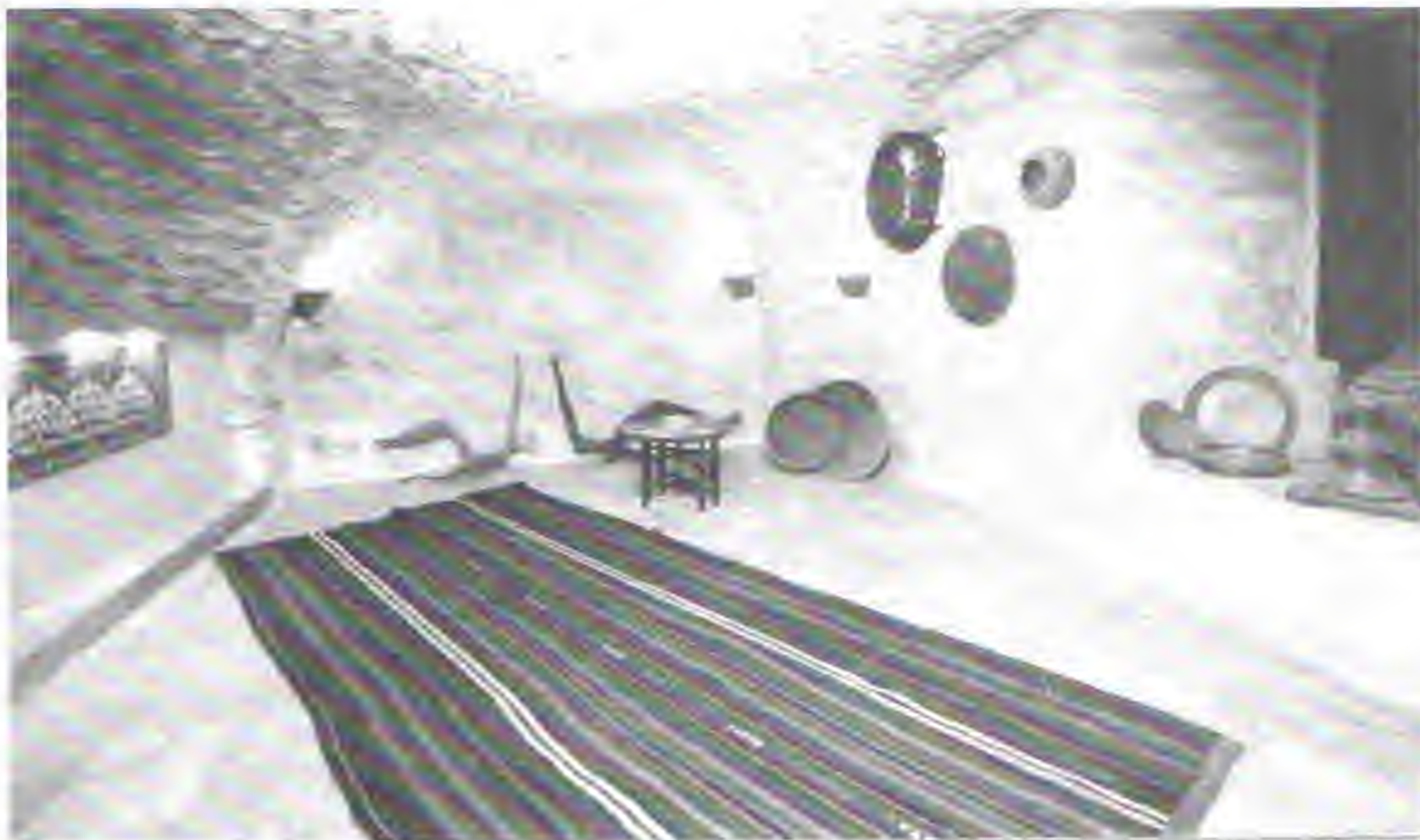
Therefore, it is with great pleasure that we submit to you our second annual report, covering the period from January 1, 1997 to December 31, 1998.

Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb

The International Center of Bethlehem's Staff

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Ms. Rana Khoury	(MA in Middle East and North African Studies)
Ms. Viola Raheb	(MA in Education and Theology)
Ms. Jihan Hawwash	(BA in Computer Science)
Dr. Nuha Khoury	(Ph.D. in Islamic History)
Mr. Nader Nassar	(BBA in Accounting)
Ms. Sophie Korte	(MA in Islamic Studies)
Mr. Majid Ishaq	(BBA in Business Administration)
Mr. Andreas Kuntz	(MA in Theology, MA in Judaic Studies)
Mr. Daoud Nassar	(BBA Business Administration)
Dr. Khouloud Daibes-Abu Dayyeh	(Ph.D. in Architecture)



Board of Directors

Dr. Mitri Raheb	General Director of the International Center of Bethlehem
Dr. Sami Mussalam	General Director of President Arafat's office in Jericho
Ms. Hind Khoury	Free-lance Consultant (Bethlehem)
Ms. Norma Musleh	Lecturer- Bethlehem University (Beit Sahour)
Ms. Suad Younan	Director of Helen Keller Foundation (Ramallah)
Mr. Sulaiman Abu Dayyeh	Freidrich Nauman Foundation- Jerusalem (Beit Jala)
Mr. Jalal Audeh	Microbiologist (Bethlehem)
Mr. Rif'at Odeh Kassis	Ecumenical Liason Office in Central Asia (Bishkek/Kyrgystan)

Women and Political Culture in Palestine and Germany: Experiences, Strategies and Perspectives

This conference, attended by a number of German and Palestinian women, was held in cooperation with the Goethe Institute-Jerusalem and the Heinrich Böll Foundation in April 3-10, 1997. Since the political role of women is not restricted to their participation in the governmental body, women who express their political interests in pressure groups or at universities were included as well. The idea of having this conference was based on the fact that Palestinian women on the eve of Statehood are facing developments and problems similar to those that German women have been facing in the last years, especially after the unification of Germany. The aim of the conference was to develop a future cooperation against the background of exchanging experiences in the different political developments in both countries and the respective strategies of the political activities. The main concern was to establish a network between Palestinian and German women engaged in politics. An important outcome of this conference was the commitment of both Palestinian and German participants to establish a network between German and Palestinian women politicians. This network will be part of a women-lobbying structure. A publication of the proceedings of this conference is under print. Altogether, twenty Palestinian and five German women took part in the conference. Due to the Jabal Abu Ghneim settlement crisis, four of the invited German women declined the invitation just one day before the conference started. The women from Gaza could not attend as well, due to the closure imposed by the Israeli authorities. However, many Palestinian women of the West Bank succeeded in coming to Bethlehem to the conference by making very exhausting detours.

Activities of the Conference:

The introductory activity began with the women getting acquainted with one another. A presentation of the program and a workshop on political biographies of the participants followed. Dr. Margit Brückner and Ms. Randa Siniora led this workshop. Ms. Siniora gave an account of her personal biography and expounded on her motivation to engage in politics. She gave an introduction of her social and political environment, which, as she stressed, made it hardly possible for her not to engage in politics. This presentation served as a stimulant for the other participants to report on their own experiences. Dr. Brückner introduced her own struggle between Leon Trotsky's principles and the women's movement. The official opening of the meeting began in the late afternoon with short introductory speeches made by Mr. Martin Kobler (Head of the German Representative Office), Dr. Christiane Günther (Goethe Institute-Jerusalem), Dr. Anne Hampele (the Heinrich Böll Foundation-Berlin), Ms. Dalal Salameh (Palestinian Legislative Council) and Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb (The International Center of Bethlehem). The time after was set aside for introductory lectures about political participation and the institutions working in women politics in both countries, namely Germany and Palestine. Ms. Eileen Kuttah began the session with a lecture entitled *Palestinian Women: Changes and New Challenges*. Dr. Margit Brückner and Ms. Tatjana Böhm followed and reported on women's political participation in West Germany and the DDR (German Democratic Republic). There was a large attendance at the meeting, where altogether around 50 people were present.



The following day began with a workshop conducted by Dr. Brückner, entitled *Violence Against Women and the Development of Feminist Care Work Projects in Germany*. Dr. Margit Brückner talked about the issue of battered women in Germany and the counseling and welfare services available for them. In the afternoon, Ms. Maha Abu Dayyeh Shammas and Ms. Amal Khreishe conducted the second workshop of the day entitled *Counseling for Women in NGOs*. They presented their experiences in counseling battered and sexually abused Palestinian women. A social gathering in the early evening was held and was later followed by two lectures. The first lecture was presented by Dr. Islah Jad and was entitled *Palestinian Women in Politics: Actual Situation and Challenges for the Future*. Dr. Kirsten Beuth gave the second lecture entitled *Women in Jobs and Families, The Social and Family Policy in the GDR and the Changed Situation of Women from the Former East Germany*. On Sunday, April 6th, two workshops were conducted. The first workshop was entitled *Women and Elections in Palestine-Germany* and the second was entitled *Women's Participation at Universities*. In the first workshop, Dr. Margot Poppenhusen gave a presentation entitled *From Women's Movement to Green Party Politics*. The second presentation was entitled *Women and Elections in Palestine*. This presentation was given by Ms. Dalal Salameli, a Palestinian Legislative Council Member. She provided many facts about the active participation of Palestinian women in the elections. She also spoke about the political and social frameworks, which support or weaken women in the nomination process. Dr. Anne Hampele gave a presentation in this workshop entitled *Women and Elections in Germany*. In the afternoon, Dr. Norma Masriyeh



Hazboun gave her lecture about the political participation of women at the universities. Immediately after, Tatjana Böhm, held a public lecture entitled *Affirmative Action Laws and Political Participation: a Special View on the Situation of Women in Eastern Germany*. The day ended with a public panel discussion on the issue of Women's Quota. The participants in this panel discussion included Ms. Suheir Azzouni, Ms. Nahla Qura, and Dr. Margot Poppenhusen.

Other Activities:

In addition to the lectures and workshops, the program of the conference included visitations to different sites and institutions. One visitation was to Bir Zeit University, where the participants got to hear about the Women's Studies Program there. To demonstrate to the German participants the extent of the difficulty that the Palestinian women faced in order to come to Bethlehem to the conference, they traveled from Bethlehem to

Bir Zeit via Wadi Al-Nar (Valley of Fire), which Palestinians have to take in order to travel between the northern and southern parts of the West Bank. Besides going sightseeing in Bethlehem and Ramallah, the German women participants made a trip to the Shepherds Fields and Mount Herodion. Also, they visited the Dohaisha refugee camp.

Summary and Suggestions for Further Cooperation:

All participants confirmed that the conference had been a success and expressed their interest in further cooperation. The conference provided an occasion for politically active Palestinian and German women to exchange views regarding the various fields of their political work. Ideas for future cooperation between some of the participants were realized. At the session set for the evaluation of the conference, two Palestinian participants proposed to hold a subsequent conference in a third country, in order to guarantee an uninterrupted partaking of all participants. A suggestion was made to organize a series of lectures on the issue of violence against women and to encourage a student exchange between the two countries.

Palestine-France-Germany Conference

The trilateral exchange program between The International Center of Bethlehem (Palestine), the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Evangelischer Jugend (AEJ) from Germany, and YMCA in France, continued in 1997. This exchange program, which stresses youth-leadership training, aims at introducing the youth of the three countries to the cultures of one another, building bridges of understanding between these countries' youth, and developing further the relations between the three countries in the field of youth-leadership.

Youth leaders from these three countries, who are charged with developing the exchange program between their respective countries and who first met in Germany and France in June 1996, reconvened in May 16-26, 1997 in Palestine. The number of youth leaders who participated was 21 individuals,



including 5 French, 9 Palestinians, and 7 Germans. The program concentrated on understanding the political and economic situation in Palestine, the Christian-Muslim dialogue, the role of women, and the social programs for the Palestinian youth. The conference had three goals, all of which were realized. These goals were:

1- To familiarize the French and German participants with the Palestinian context. The lectures and encounters with local Palestinians provided the German and French participants with the Palestinian perspective on issues of political and economic nature, Christian-Muslim dialogue, and the role of women. The visitations and the excursions in Palestine, especially the trip to Gaza on May 22, served to reinforce the impressions that the participants had gained from the lectures and the encounters with the local Palestinians.

2- To continue the cross-cultural exchange between the youth of the three countries on issues of mutual interests.

These issues include the situation of and the availability of programs for the young people in each country, the future awaiting the youth in the three countries, and the possibility of creating programs that would engage the youth effectively in their own societies.

3- To evaluate this trilateral exchange pilot project and to give recommendations for future cooperation.

The following questions were central for the evaluation process.

a. Which of the set goals were reached and which were not?

b. What can the participants do to encourage the youth to take part in similar future projects?

c. What is the role of the participating individuals and organizations in realizing possible future projects?

d. How can the participants make use of this cross-cultural encounter, both on personal and professional levels?

e. What do the participants think is essential for future exchange projects?

As a first step, a number of the participating youth leaders will organize a series of bi-lateral youth exchanges (Palestine-Germany and Palestine-France). The first French youth group will be coming to the International Center of Bethlehem in August 1998.

In its effort to promote cultural tourism as well as networking among different national and international organizations interested in developing a new approach to tourism, the International Center of Bethlehem has been engaged in the *Destination Christmas- Peace on Earth* project. The project, which will run for the duration of two years, endeavors to develop different cultural programs, youth exchange programs, and tourism industry projects in each and among the different participating countries.

The project partners come from different cities and regions in the world. These cities and regions include the city of Turku-Finland, the Rovaniemi Region-Finland, the city of Naples-Italy, the Region of Alsace-France, the city of St. Petersburg-Russia, and the city of Bethlehem-Palestine. Since all of the participating countries, including Palestine, have unique Christmas traditions, the theme around which the programs and projects will revolve is Christmas.

Accordingly, the *Destination Christmas* project will promote projects that would link these countries together and encourage tourism in all of them.

The stated goal behind launching this project is as follows:

- 1- Create a joint international tourist product related to Christmas traditions and festivities.
- 2- Provide an effort of solidarity and assistance to the development of Bethlehem and generally to all the associate Palestinian partners that would be participating in the project.
- 3- Take the opportunity of the two-year cooperation period in order to develop reciprocal tourist flows and examine and pursue all other forms of cooperation in tourism and other fields. The partners launching this project identified five fields as possible cooperation areas.

These fields are the following:

- 1) Tourism Promotion Strategy- Plan of Actions and of Events
- 2) Spiritual, Historical and Cultural Heritage
- 3) Arts and Crafts- Design, Production and Marketing
- 4) Promotion of Gastronomy Traditions
- 5) New Information and Communication Technologies



To discuss the different ideas that each of the participating organizations and countries have regarding the project as well as ideas of possible joint activities, a workshop was held at the International Center of Bethlehem on December 15-16, 1997. Dr. Hanan Ashrawi, the Minister of Higher Education and Chairwoman of the Bethlehem 2000 Committee officially opened the workshop. To execute different actions that were decided upon during the workshop, joint partnerships were formed among different organizations. As one of the associate Palestinian partners, the International Center of Bethlehem will be involved in the following actions:

1-Turku Christian Institute's Proposal.

The International Center of Bethlehem will be involved in several proposals that were made by the Turku Christian Institute, in liaison with Turku Polytechnic Arts and Media, as well as the Turku Historical Museum.

2- Presentation in Bethlehem of traditional gastronomy traditions of the different countries involved. This will involve presenting the sound, sight, and taste traditions of the different project partners.

3- Youth exchanges, which include youth camps, tourism products, specific events such as sports and/or artistic competitions, etc. This approach would include the specific vocational training actions (transfer of know-how) concerning both the collective (youth hostels and so on) and individual and family accommodations.

4- Alsace Theological Faculties Proposals.

Similar to the Turku Christian Institute's proposal, the Catholic and Protestant Theology Faculties of Strasbourg proposed seven different actions. These actions are in the field of spiritual and cultural traditions as well as in the field of support for development. A specific action identified as part of developmental support activity is fundraising. It has been suggested that through sales tax imposed on Christmas trees, money can be raised to plant olive groves in Palestine.

5- The Destination Christmas Nativity Scene.

A proposal was made to study the possibility of creating a multicultural artistic presentation of the Nativity Scene through cooperation of artists coming from the different regions that are represented by the different participants.



Interfaith Workshop on "The future of Religion"

From December 7-12, 1997 the WCC in cooperation with the Swedish Theological Center in Jerusalem hosted an international

workshop on the issue of the "The future of Religion". The workshop was to examine the religious scene worldwide. With the effects of globalization, similar questions are being discussed in the different contexts relating to issues of the role of religion in society and in public life, the future of religion and religions, the tension between the individual and the collective, the secular world and the so



called "return of religion", the relationship between the so called popular religion and the established religion as well as the question of secularization. With the Middle East as the immediate and complex context, the workshop attempted to make an assessment of the present realities within the various historical religions. The workshop participants represented seven different countries. On December 9, 1997 the International Center of Bethlehem hosted one part of this workshop, focusing on the issue of contextual religion from a Christian point of view. Three main presentations were given:

- 1) "Visions, Traditions and Tensions. The Indian Scene from a Christian Perspective," by Dr. Israel Selvanayagam.
- 2) "Current Trends and Future Perspectives on the Future of Christianity in Palestine," by Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb & Ms. Viola Raheb.
- 3) "Contextual Theology in Modernity-Feminist Perspectives in World Religions," by Dr. Kajsa Ahlstrand.

Workshop on German-Palestinian Cultural Exchange and Cooperation

On March 6, 1997, the International Center of Bethlehem hosted a one-day workshop that examined the possibilities and areas of German-Palestinian cultural exchange and cooperation. Representatives of several Palestinian cultural institutions, from different areas of the West Bank, met with a delegation from the Cultural Bureau at the German Foreign Ministry. This German delegation accompanied the German Foreign Minister, Mr. Klaus Kinkel, on his visit to Palestine.

Seminar on Palestinian Contextual Theology

The International Center of Bethlehem hosted a seminar on Palestinian contextual theology in April 7-18, 1997 for a group from Switzerland that consisted of theologians and theology students. Rev. Dr. Albert Rieger, who is a theologian working at the Desk for Ecumenical Relations at the Church in Bern, led the group. By staying at Abu Gubran guesthouse, and through the arranged visitation program, the group was offered the opportunity to understand the context of Palestine. Through the lectures, Bible studies and encounters with Palestinian Christians, the group was made aware of the main issues that are being addressed by Palestinian contextual theology.

Christian Religious Education

In 1997 the International Center of Bethlehem hosted a workshop on Christian Religious Education. Dr. Harry Wendt, from Crossways International, conducted this workshop for thirteen teachers of Christian religious education at the ELCF schools. The workshop was made of two parts. The first was an introduction by Dr. Wendt to the religious education material that he and his institution developed. The second part of the workshop focused on the issue of Palestinian contextual approach. Due to the success of the first workshop, a second workshop will be organized for 1998.

Film: The Veiled Hope

The International Center of Bethlehem hosted a showing of the film *The Veiled Hope*, which was directed by Ms. Norma Murqus, a Palestinian woman director who is currently residing in France. The film addresses a number of issues that Palestinian women are dealing with today, such as modernity vs. tradition, the issue of veiling, and work outside the home. Immediately following the showing, a discussion with the director took place regarding some of the issues that were presented by the film. The film was attended by a large number of men and women.



Frauenarbeit der Evangelischen Landeskirche in Württemberg

As a new step towards strengthening relations with the Women's Work Association of the Evangelischen Landeskirche in Württemberg, which was founded in 1992, the International Center of Bethlehem hosted a women group in 1997 from the Association under the leadership of its Chairperson, Ms. Gertrud Hahn. The group stayed at the Abu Gubran guesthouse and participated in an alternative tour program, which included visitations to different local organizations. The tour program was arranged jointly by the International Center and the Association. At the same time, the women had the opportunity to meet with active Palestinian women involved in the Center's work as well as with local women from Bethlehem. Both German and Palestinian women expressed their hope in strengthening the existing ties among both organizations.

Panel Discussion: Violence in the Family

A Panel discussion was held at the International Center of Bethlehem on the issue of violence against women from the perspective of Islam and Christianity. This panel discussion is one of a series that a number of women organizations, including the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committees and the Women's Center for Legal Aid & Counseling, sponsored for the year 1997 under the theme Violence in the Family. The Christian point of view was presented by Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb, while the Islamic one was presented by the Qadi al-Qudah of the Shari'a Court, Sheikh al-Tamimi. Over seventy five women from Bethlehem and the surrounding area were present.



Intensive Course for Palestinian Guides

Palestinians who are training to be future tour guides in the Holy Land have to be educated in a holistic and comprehensive manner. This is particularly true due to the diverse situation of this region. A situation that necessitates an educational process that is composed, manifold, and pluralistic. Therefore, the International Center of Bethlehem is offering an intensive tour-guide-training course for Palestinian women and men, who are interested in becoming professional tour-guides.



This course commenced in October 1997. Twenty-one students have registered, the majority of which are women. This course emphasizes a new approach to guiding, which is socially responsible and which mainly targets women to become tour-guides.

The guiding course, which is being taught by a number of local and international scholars, aims to

1. Train Palestinians as guides to provide the tourists coming to the Holy Land with a comprehensive picture of the country
2. Empower Palestinians to become the voice of the voiceless, thus creating, among tourists and pilgrims, awareness and understanding for the issues of peace and justice.
3. Introduce and encourage the idea of a woman guide into the Palestinian tourism sector, thus influencing the Palestinian society to become gender-sensitive.
4. Empower women economically by training them and equipping them with the necessary skills to enable them to find jobs.
5. Introduce a new approach to guiding which is socially-responsible by emphasizing three categories, namely: (a) visiting the important sites all over the country, including the sites that have been so far neglected, especially those in the West Bank, (b) giving a face to the land through encounters with the "living stones" rather than just the archaeological sites, and (c) introducing the visitors to the social, political, cultural, and religious realities.
6. Publish a textbook to be used by future courses.

Curriculum and Methods

The three-semester course is oriented towards building historical knowledge. Subjects taught include archeology, Palestinian society and culture, geography, religion, guiding (psychology, law, ethics, first aid, etc.), political systems, etc. A special attention is paid to Biblical knowledge and to the connection between the Biblical narrative and the geographical locations. The guides will be trained to identify and try to meet the spiritual needs of the different groups. Rather than using the lecture method of teaching as the primary methodology of instruction, the course is focusing on students' participation. Such technique, we believe, will influence the students' guiding style and will allow them to be versatile.



An integral part of the course has been the field trips, which are considered to be an essential part of these guides' training. The student-guides visited well known sites that are of historical interest, such as Tel Arad, Tel Sheva (David's Ziklag), Herodion, Ophel (with Warren Shaft, the Siloach-Tunnel and the village of Silwan), Tel el-

Mutesselim (Meggido), Bet Shean (the Hellenistic-Roman Skythopolis and the Arabic Beisan), etc. Moreover, the students visited places that are of religious interest, such as the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron, Mamre, The Shepherds Fields, Mar Geries (St. George), the Monasteries of Mar Saba and Mar Theodosios, Tabgha (Heptapegon), etc. In addition, sites that have been so far neglected were also visited. These sites include al-Sammu' (Khirbet Eshtemo'a), Tulul Abu al-Alayik and Tel al-Samrat (Herodian Jericho), Tel en-Nesbe (Mitzpa), Bettin (Bet El), Et Tel (Ai), Tel Balata (Nablus or Shikhem), Samariya (Sebaste), Tel Ta'annak, and many other sites in the West Bank.

Emphasis in this course has also been placed on using the expertise of both Palestinian and international scholars. Therefore, lectures have been given by Palestinian scholars, such as Mr. Ghattas Sayigh, Mr. Hanna Muslih, and Dr. Jad Ishaq, as well as international scholars including Dr. Robert Mullins, Dr. Robert Miller II (W.F. Albright Institute), Mr. Marcel Baudry (Ecole Biblique), Professor Volkmar Fritz, and Dr. Roland Deines (German Protestant Institute). The course is funded by a grant from The World Day of Prayer - German Committee as well as the Thank Offering (Including Health Ministries) of the Presbyterian Women - Women Ministries (Presbyterian Church - USA).

Lectures and Architectural Tours

As part of the Alternative Tourism program, the International Center of Bethlehem arranges lectures for interested foreign groups. The issues that these lectures address include the inter-religious dialogue in the Holy Land, Palestinian Christians, Women's issues, contextual theology, and the Bethlehem 2000 project. In addition to lectures, the International Center also arranges architectural tours of the city of Bethlehem to acquaint the visitors with the landmarks in this ancient city as well as to update them on the developments that are taking place in preparation for the celebrations of the year 2000 as part of the **Bethlehem 2000** project.

Guiding Coordinators

Through the efforts of the International Center to educate and train young Palestinians in the sector of tourism industry and management, the International Center has been engaged in a number of activities that further this goal. To begin with, and through the reintegration program that the International Center has, Mr. Majed Ishaq, who works at the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities was sent to Germany with a KAAD scholarship to obtain a post-graduate training program in tourism management. After his return in October 1997, he joined the staff of the Center as one of the coordinators for the Intensive Course for Training Palestinian Guides.

Mr. Andreas Kuntz from Germany has also joined the staff of the International Center as one of the coordinators for the guiding course. As part of his vocational training for pastorphism, Mr. Kuntz stayed at the ICB for four months. Mr. Kuntz has a Masters' degree in Theology and a Masters' degree in Judaic Studies. He has been working for the last few years with different tour agencies as tour leader for German groups visiting the Holy Land. Mr. Kuntz will be rejoining the staff of the Center for another year beginning in March 1998.

Mr. Daoud Nassar, the former manager of Abu Gubran guesthouse, has been sent to Germany on a scholarship to study tourism. He will be returning at the end of 1998, where his training will be put to use to further develop the International Center of Bethlehem's Alternative Tourism program.

Alternative Tourism Network (ATN)

The International Center of Bethlehem has been hosting the Alternative Tourism Network, now called Jisr Network-A Bridge to Responsible Holy Land Travel, for the year 1997 and will continue to do so in 1998. As a member of this network since its inception in 1995, the Center has been active in coordinating and attending meetings. The network is of different non-governmental, non-profit organizations that work and focus on alternative tourism.



Award for Socially Responsible Tourism

The efforts of the ICB in the field of Palestinian tourism has received international recognition at the International Tourism Exchange (Internationale Tourismus Boerse) in Berlin, which was held in March 1997. In Berlin, where Palestine was represented for the first time, the ICB was granted the **TODO!1996** award for the promotion of socially responsible tourism. Twenty-three institutions from seventeen different countries and five continents competed for this award.

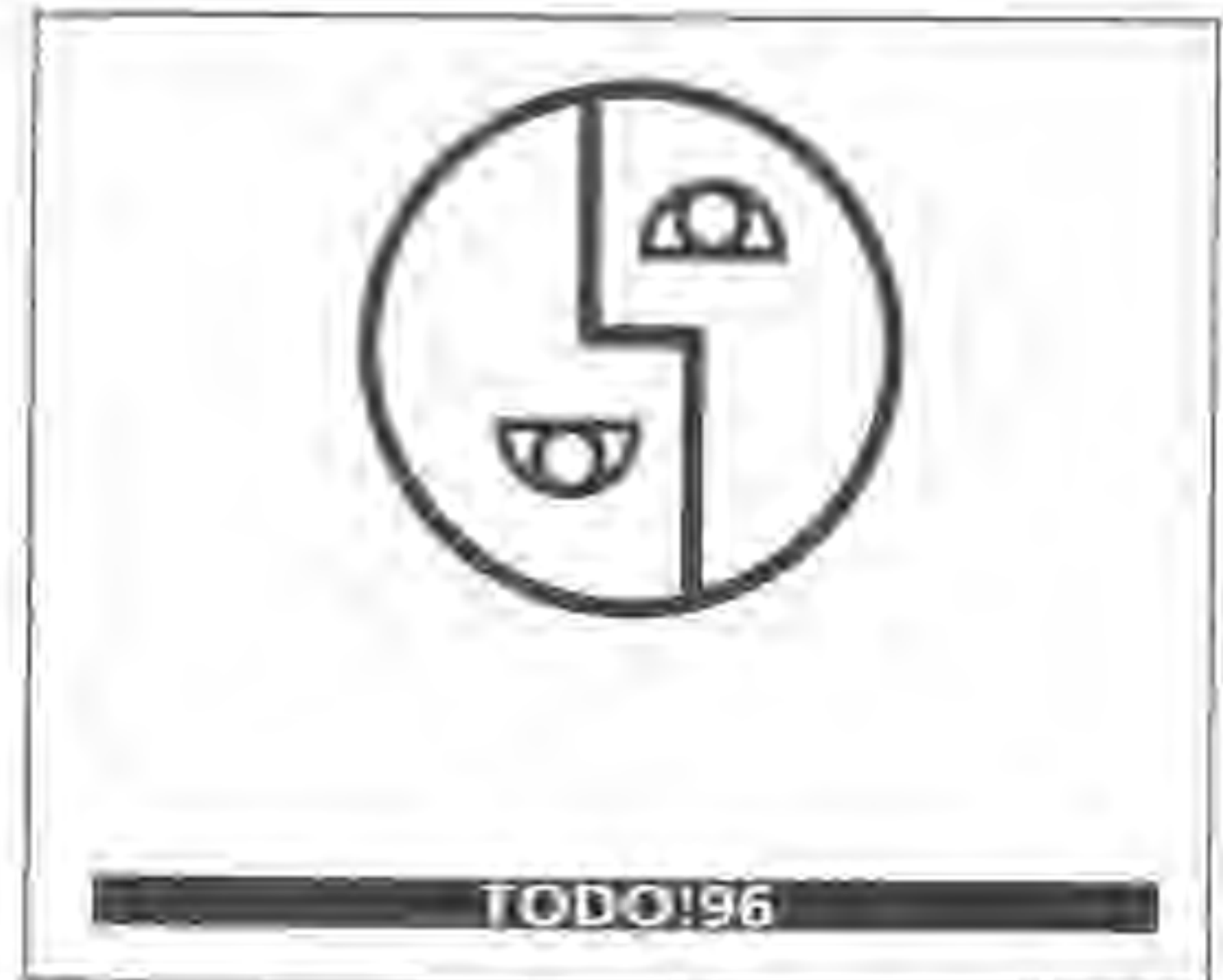
The TODO contest is supported by government and church bodies as well as by tourism enterprises. It is organized by the Studienkreis Für Tourismus und Entwicklung in cooperation with the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the Ecumenical Coalition on Third World Tourism, The Messe Berlin GmbH, the Austrian Development Cooperation in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Tourism Watch (ZEB). Supporters of the TODO! contest have so far been the German Lufthansa AG and LTU International Airways.

The TODO! contest criteria is mainly concerned that the various interests of the local people are taken into consideration in the planning and implementation of tourism projects. For this to happen, the local people must be actively involved at all levels. The chances and risks of such endeavors must be transparent to all parties concerned, and so must be the scope and distribution of the economic profits expected. Some of the other criteria for the contest are: the guarantee for the attractiveness of jobs in tourism as well as taking precautions that the local culture is upheld and enhanced. The minimization of social and cultural damage caused by tourism is another criterion of the TODO! contest.

According to the member of the German Parliament Ms. Susanne Kastner, the speaker of the SPD parliamentary group for tourism policies, "The International Center showed in which way one can foster dialogue, understanding and social justice in a politically very sensitive area." According to Mr. Peter-Mario Kubsch, the Director of Studiosus Travel, "The International Center of Bethlehem almost ideally represents the vision of Studiosus, i.e. building

bridges to other people and cultures- beyond inner and outer limitations. In this case the vision of understanding between nations as a result of tourism becomes reality."

The International Center of Bethlehem, situated in the heart of Bethlehem, is mainly concerned with fostering a Palestinian civil society. In this transitional period from occupation to the formation of a sovereign state, the Center finds it important at this stage to get involved when the course is set with regard to tourism policy and socio-cultural development. The Center is a guesthouse, a place of encounter, a center for conferences, communication, cultural learning and experience, for peace and women's work – all at the same time.



It is an island rising above all the turbulence, a platform welcoming both individual travelers and small tourist groups. And this in an environment which is very authentic. The center wants to make sure that in the end the kind of tourism industry it will be able to develop will benefit the



Palestinians. This could for example be promoted by referring guests to small hotels and bed and breakfast guesthouses in other places, or by referring foreign visitors to selected Palestinian tour operators and guides and to local artists and musicians.

Since the Oslo agreement, tourism in the West Bank from a legal point of view came under the control of the Palestinian Authority. Yet, in reality it is the Israeli travel agents that control most of it. It is

still a common practice that a group of tourists visiting the Holy Land are contracted to Israeli travel agencies even during their visit to the West Bank, whereby these agencies will use Israeli hotels, restaurants, transportation, and tour guides (there are more than five thousand licensed Israeli tour guides, while only thirty nine Palestinians guides).

Each year, almost two million tourists visit the Holy Land. One million of these visitors, three quarters of whom are Christian pilgrims, visit Bethlehem to see the Nativity Church. These visitors normally stay in Bethlehem less than two hours. During their stay, most of these visitors do not get to tour the old city or have any contact with the city's residents, thus ignoring the local population and avoiding any real attempt to understand the Palestinian-Israeli problem.

The International Center of Bethlehem is playing an important role in this field, where it provides a forum for people from all over the world to come and meet Palestinians. The Center realizes that there is a need at this point in the state-building process to participate in the touristic, economic, social, cultural, and political developments. Through its work, the Center provides a model for such participation. The Center sees in tourism an opportunity for realizing international communication and promotion of direct human encounters as well as the creation of job opportunities.

The International Center was granted the *TODO!* award based on an evaluation criterion that the selection committee had set. The criteria is the following:

- * Integration of the different interests and needs of the local community through a participatory approach.
- * Increase local residents' awareness of the opportunities and risks that tourism development has on their daily, economic, social and cultural lives.
- * Ensure that a wider segment of the local population benefits from the economic, social and cultural effects of tourism.
- * Attract local residents to work in the tourism sector through ensuring better working conditions especially in relation to salaries, social security, work hours, training and continuous education.
- * Endorse the local culture and cultural identity of residents of touristic areas.
- * Avoid and minimize social and cultural damages that may result from tourism, especially around touristic sites.
- * Adopt new methods for partnerships/cooperation between tourist agencies abroad and the local residents.
- * Create adequate conditions and framework for the development of a socially responsible tourism in targeted areas.
- * Adherence of proposed projects and activities to environment-sensitive principles.

In October 1997, the International Center of Bethlehem honored two of its dear friends, Rev. Dr. Paul Rowald and Father Thomas (Wilhelm Josef Karl). A reception was held in honor of these two individuals, who had shown a great deal of commitment to the Center's work. The ceremony was attended by a number of local and international guests. An award was given to each of the two individuals as a sign of appreciation for the friendship that they have shown towards the Center. It has been decided by the administration and staff that each year one or two individuals will be honored for the role that they have played in the life of the Center.

During the ceremony, Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb gave a speech in which he thanked the honored persons for their friendship to the International Center. The following is an excerpt of Rev. Raheb's speech.

Today, we want to honor two very good friends, who have shown great enthusiasm and a very special commitment to our work. It is my pleasure to introduce Rev. Dr. Paul Rowald and Brother Thomas. By choosing these two friends of ours, the philosophy of the Center becomes clear: While Paul is a Lutheran pastor at the Good Shepherd Church in Polson, Montana, Brother Thomas is a Brother at the Dormition Abbey in Jerusalem. This illustrates the ecumenical dimension of the Center. Whereas Rev. Rowald is from the United States of America, Brother Thomas is from Germany. This shows the two geographical focal areas of the Center's international work in the last two years. Brother Thomas and Rev. Paul are good friends of the Palestinian people in general, and good friends of the Palestinian Christian community in particular.

They have in common their persistence and continuous never-failing support. We have met many people who would support us for one time only, others who got all fired up, but after a while they calmed down and became cold. The flames of Brother Thomas and Rev. Paul have never died down.

They have been sharing with us both our sufferings and joy. In times of hardships, Paul would always call and say, "Our thoughts and prayers are with you". Brother Thomas would come during strict closures to visit us with a message: "We are in solidarity with you". We value this faithful stance. We came to know many people who would like to see us only as victims, poor, in need, they cannot rejoice with us whenever we are successful. We came to know Paul and Thomas as friends who rejoice with us.

They have been our ambassadors in the world. They have been telling everybody "come and see. Go and visit your brothers and sisters in Bethlehem." They are two friends who doubled the numbers of our friends. They widened the circle of our supporters.

Pastor Paul has always encouraged groups touring the Holy Land to come to us by saying, "you cannot visit the Holy Land without visiting Bethlehem, the Palestinian people and the local Christian community there."

Brother Thomas has been confronting many international organizations that exist in Jerusalem in islands by themselves. Brother Thomas has been working hard to overcome their isolation from the Palestinian community. He has been telling them "you cannot be witnesses here unless you live in community with the Palestinian people."



The number of people emigrating from Palestine to other countries has been increasing at an alarming rate. The most dangerous aspect of this emigration is that it is depriving Palestine from its human resources. The Reintegration Program at the International Center is concerned with stopping emigration of Palestinian academicians and motivating young Palestinian graduates of foreign universities to return to Palestine and contribute with their qualifications to the building of the future Palestinian state. The program, which provides services for a fast growing group of young people, is implemented through a number of mechanisms, including providing academic counseling, networking and coordinating with institutions that are working in the field of reintegration in Palestine, dissemination of information, promotion of German language, and sponsoring cultural and social activities for the returnee graduates.

Although currently the Reintegration Program is operating on a smaller scale due to financial reasons, it continued in 1997 the activities that it had undertaken in 1996. One such activity is the counseling services for recent high school and university graduates. The counseling aims at facilitating the students' contact with universities and to direct them to studying fields that are scarce and needed in the Palestinian society.

The number of those who benefited from this service in 1997 was 42 students. In the year 1997 as well, four scholarships were secured for graduates who are interested in pursuing further training in fields that are still lacking in Palestine, such as tourism and zoology. For the year 1998, the International Center is aiming at increasing this number since it has a large number of applications out.

As for the networking activity and dissemination of information, the Reintegration Program organized a meeting in July between Palestinian graduates of German universities and the Deutsche Ausgleichsbank. The Deutsche Ausgleichsbank is an institution that has a soft loans program earmarked for small business projects in the Palestinian autonomous areas. Thirty interested graduates attended the meeting.

Graduates Club

On the social level, we have organized and sponsored a number of activities, through the Graduates Club, that aim at providing the graduates with friendships and attachments that would enhance their feelings of belonging, which will reintegrate them into the society at a faster pace. Through recreation, the graduates will build a social network and strengthen the ties that they have to their culture, as well as to their historic and traditional heritage. Some of the activities that were organized in 1997 included trips to different cities and archeological sites in the West Bank and Israel, lectures given by the graduates themselves as well as from outside lecturers, folkloric dabke dancing, choir classes, tennis, dinners and gatherings, movie nights, and visits to local institutions.





Dabke Troupe

The Graduates have formed a dabke dancing troupe (Folkloric Palestinian dancing) and have been training very hard to participate in the cultural events that are scheduled for the celebrations of the year 2000.



Bethlehem 2000 Graduates Committee

As part of the Graduates Club's attempt to get involved in issues that are of concern to the community, a number of sub-committees were formed to follow up on these issues and recommend the best possible ways of involving the graduates in them. One of these sub-committees is the **Bethlehem 2000 committee**. The objectives of this committee are:

- Gathering and disseminating information on the Bethlehem 2000 project.
- Raising the awareness of the graduates concerning the importance of the event and the necessity of getting involved.
- Contributing to the preparations for the year 2000, where Bethlehem will be the focus of the world.
- Offering the graduates' education and professional experience as volunteers to help bring the **Bethlehem 2000** project to fruition and to contribute to the development and growth of the Bethlehem area.

Market-Place Awareness Campaign

The United Nations Development Project (UNDP) has launched an awareness campaign to inform the public of the infrastructure work that is taking place in the old market place, the Najjajreh street, and the Star street. The UNDP has elicited the help of the Graduates' Club to distribute brochures and explain the work that will be done in the old market place as well as the need for cooperation of the public, especially those who are located in the areas where the actual work is taking place. A number of the graduates volunteered to go to the marketplace to hand out these brochures and to listen to the concerns that these individuals have regarding this issue.

These concerns were documented and some of the questions that the public asked were answered. These concerns were relayed to the Bethlehem Municipality during a meeting that was set specifically for this purpose.

Meeting with the Bethlehem Municipality

A meeting between the Graduates Club Bethlehem 2000 Committee and the Bethlehem Municipality was set up by the UNDP on October 18, 1997. The reason for the meeting was to relay the concerns of the public regarding the infrastructure works that were started in October of 1997. Its engineer, Mr. Judeh Murqus, who promised to look into what the Municipality can do to meet these concerns, represented the Municipality.

Acko and Haifa Trip

As part of the Know Your Country series, the Graduates Club organized a trip to Haifa and Acko. While in Haifa, the graduates visited St. Elias Church and the Bahai Shrine. In Acko, the graduates visited the old city of Acko and its architectural landmarks.



The National Conservatory of Music

As part of its philosophy, the International Center of Bethlehem seeks to network with existing Palestinian institutions for the betterment of the society as a whole. Therefore, the International Center of Bethlehem in cooperation with The Palestinian National Conservatory of Music opened a music school in Bethlehem in 1997. The Palestinian National Conservatory of Music was first established in the city of Ramallah in 1993. The goal of the International Center of Bethlehem and the Palestinian National Conservatory of Music of establishing a branch in Bethlehem is to create a new artistic generation as well as to revive music as an art form that will enrich the cultural life of Bethlehem. Currently, the number of students registered at the Conservatory in Bethlehem is 66 students (33 males and 33 females). These students are learning different musical instruments, including piano (27), violin (18), guitar (7), 'ud (6), chello (2), clarinet (2), saxophone (2), and voice (2). The Conservatory also has a section for teaching music theory (Solfaj) as well as a children's section, which teaches them to play the violin according to the Roland method. For next year, the enrollment is expected to reach 120 students. At the moment, ten employees are involved in the project. These employees comprise of the director, the assistant director and eight music teachers



Ishtar Theater Group

The International Center hosted a play by the Palestinian Theater group Ishtar on July 17, 1997. The play, entitled *Shu'un Abu Shaker 97*, is a satire on the authoritarian patriarchal system in the Palestinian society. Using a Brechtian style, the director asked the audience to get involved directly in the play as the act was repeated to try and change its outcome.



Artist in Residence

The German artist Mr. Jan Peter Hampele has been our artist in residence from December 1997 until mid February 1998. While with us, Jan Peter volunteered his skills and talent to paint the ceiling and walls of the cistern that will be part of the Arts and Craft Gift shop, which will be opened in Christmas 1998 as part of the Dar al-Kalima project. Jan Peter also painted a poster, which embodies his vision of Bethlehem for the year 2000. This poster will be reproduced and adopted as the official poster of the International Center of Bethlehem for the Bethlehem 2000.



Storytelling

In cooperation with the Austrian Embassy and the Goethe Institute in Tel Aviv, the International Center of Bethlehem hosted Mr. Stefan Slupetzky on December 16, 1998 for an afternoon of storytelling for children between the ages of five and nine. Mr. Slupetzky, an author of children and youth literature as well as an illustrator, told the children a story about a curious bear named Urs. Through the illustrations that he drew, the children were able to follow Mr. Slupetzky's story vividly. In spite of the rainy weather, more than 80 children participated in this event.



Author Reading

On April 11, 1997 the International Center of Bethlehem, in cooperation with the Frankfurter Book fair and the Goethe Institute Jerusalem, hosted a reading evening with the German novelist Monika Maron. Ms. Maron read excerpts from her book "Stille Zeile Sechs," which received several awards. Monika Maron was born in

1941 in Berlin and has lived since 1951 in East Berlin. The novel, which was published in 1991, is meant to settle the score with the DDR (German Democratic Republic) and Communism. Following the reading, a discussion with the audience took place. The majority of the audience comprised of Palestinians who were educated in Germany and of Germans living in Palestine.



Ensemble Voccatta Melanchthon Choir Mannheim

A performance by the Ensemble Voccatta Melanchthon Choir Mannheim was held at the Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church on May 30, 1997. Conductor Ms. Chrisiane Brasse-Nothdurft and Professor Dr. Mathias Schneider (Organ) led the Choir ensemble. The performance was sponsored by the German Music Council and YTONG.

A Mural as a Living Sign for the Köln Bethlehem Partnership:

Within the ongoing exchange and cooperation with the Köln-Bethlehem Partnership Society, the International Center of Bethlehem hosted two artists from the City of Köln, Mr. Nicolai Blechinger and Ms. Malis Borenet. In an effort to give face to the partnership between the two cities, both artists worked for a period of two days on a wall painting in our youth club. The wall painting shows the Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem alongside the Cologne Dome, which is a sign of the partnership as well as a depiction of the three monotheistic religions denoting a symbol of hope in a future peaceful coexistence.



Art Workshop I

In collaboration with Sunbula, the International Center held a two-week summer art workshop for children. The artist Talib Dweik, who ran the workshop, taught the children different painting techniques. The children held a public art exhibit of their work at the end of the workshop. Several of the paintings displayed were selected by an evaluation committee and were reprinted as post cards, which the International Center is currently marketing.

Art Workshop II

During the period of September 15 to October 20, 1997, an art workshop for children was held at the International Center of Bethlehem. Twenty-five children from the Bethlehem region participated in this workshop. This workshop was conducted by Ms. Faten Nastas and Ms. Samar Ghattas, both of who are residents of Bethlehem.

The workshop aimed at giving a basic introduction on art education to children, whose ages ranged between twelve to sixteen. The information was passed to the children through:

- 1) Narrating children's stories on the history of art.
- 2) Analyzing and applying some of the art theories of drawing, painting, photography and so on.
- 3) Visiting several art workshops and museums, so as to give children an opportunity to experience for themselves what art means
- 4) Exposing children to the world of art and offering them possibilities to meet with local artists.



Cultural Activities

The Frankfurt Book Fair

The International Center of Bethlehem, in association with the Frankfurt Book Fair (Die Ausstellungs- und Messe-GmbH des Borsenvereins des Deutschen Buchhandels), the Goethe Institute, and the German Representative Office in Jericho, hosted an international book fair from April 23-29, 1997. It was a mobile book fair, which was held at the Center and in other areas that are under the Palestinian Authority after the conclusion of the Jerusalem Book Fair of 1997. Eight hundred titles were displayed in subjects such as language, literature, art, sociology, psychology, philosophy, tourism, medicine, biology, architecture, and other subjects. This was the first time that the Frankfurter Book Fair holds a book exhibition in Palestine. The book fair attracted a high percentage of the local population, drawing at least 1,000 people.



During the month of April 1997, the International Center of Bethlehem hosted a Norwegian delegation from the city of Sarpsborg under the leadership of the Mayor of Sarpsborg. During the last few years, the city of Sarpsborg has developed good relations to the city of Bethlehem, which resulted in signing a twin-city agreement in 1997. The delegation represented both the city of Sarpsborg and the partnership society, which was established to strengthen ties between the two cities.



On April 30, 1997, the former German Minister Mr. Wischnewski visited the International Center of Bethlehem. Mr. Wischnewski is the honorary president of the current Köln-Bethlehem Partnership Society. During his visit, Mr. Wischnewski was honored by President Arafat for his active role in fostering German-Palestinian relations. In honor of Mr. Wischnewski, the ICB hosted a dinner party to which the late former Mayor of the city of Bethlehem and Minister of Tourism, Mr. Elias Freij, was invited. A number of other dignitaries from Bethlehem were also invited to this dinner party.

On October 23, 1997 a delegation of the German Parliament from CDU, CSU parties visited the International Center of Bethlehem. The delegation, consisting of a working group on Tourism, was visiting Palestine with the aim of studying the impact of tourism on third world countries. During their visit, the delegation met with Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb, General Director of the Center, as well as with other staff members who gave a short introduction on the Center's involvement in the area of tourism and its efforts in developing socially-responsible tourism.

A delegation from the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Development Cooperation, headed by the Finnish Undersecretary of State, Ms. Kirsti Lintonen, together with Ms. Saara-Maria Paakkinen and Mr. Jarno Syrjälä visited the Center in October of 1997. A second visit to the International Center Bethlehem during the same month was made by another delegation commissioned by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, which included Dr. Juhani Forsberg, Secretary for Theology Church Office for International Relations Helsinki and Mr. Veikko Vasko, Architect SAFA. The visit was to examine the situation in the area and the possibility of providing Finnish support to the project Bethlehem 2000. The recommendations that the Delegation made to the Finnish Foreign Ministry were to support the auditorium of the

In the last few years, the International Center of Bethlehem has been keen on developing and strengthening American-Palestinian relations. As a new step towards deepening ties with the New England Synod, whose partnership with the ELCJ started back in the 1980s, a delegation of the New England Synod visited Palestine in the period between October 28 and November 11, 1997. The delegation's stay in Bethlehem was arranged by the International Center of Bethlehem which organized several lectures and presentations that focused on a number of issues, including politics, economics, education, and contextual theology.

On November 11, 1997, a delegation of WCRP (World Conference on Religion and Peace) visited the International Center of Bethlehem. Dr. William Vendley, Secretary-General, and Rev. John Baldock, Associate Secretary-General led the delegation. During this visit, the delegation discussed issues concerning the future cooperation between the WCRP and the ICB, especially since the WCRP's General Assembly will be held in Amman, Jordan in November 1999.

Mr. Abdallah Frangi, the Head of the Palestinian Representative Office in Germany, visited the International Center of Bethlehem during his visit to Palestine in December 1997. He was informed of the latest developments on Dar al-Kalima Academy project.



During their visit to the Holy Land in December 1997, the Danish delegation of the PL-Foundation visited the International Center of Bethlehem. The delegation, which was headed by Mr. Carl Johannes Seeber and Rev. Claus Helsbol, was informed of the work that the International Center undertakes. The PL-Foundation itself is an institution that is mainly concerned with peace and human rights issues.

During Christmas of 1997, the Spanish Architect Mr. Marcià Codinachs and his family visited the International Center of Bethlehem. Mr. Codinachs, who is working at the University Politecnica De Catalunya, was interested in Dar al Kalima Academy and the possibilities of future cooperation and networking between Palestine and Spain.

Palestine Academy For Interreligious And Intercultural Studies



The city of Bethlehem, the city of Christ, will soon be celebrating 2000 years of Christianity. As a contribution to the **Bethlehem 2000** project, which is concerned with preparing Bethlehem for this momentous historical event, the International Center of Bethlehem will establish *Dar al-Kalima Academy*. The Academy, which is an ecumenical institution, will be opened by Christmas of 1999. This institution will serve as a link between the North and the South.

The main goal of Dar al-Kalima is:

- 1- Creating a forum where encounters between people from different backgrounds and religious faiths can take place.
- 2- Encouraging active communications between Palestine and the rest of the world.
- 3- Helping to shape the Palestinian cultural identity through the development of disciplines such as music and art.
- 4- Encouraging the establishment of a network between educators, musicians and artists from around the world.
- 5- Restoring to Palestine the place it occupied earlier on the map of the theological thought. It is our hope that the Academy will contribute to the revival of old and the development of new theological traditions in the South in general, and in the West-Asian countries in particular, using a contextual and cross-cultural approach.

The Dar al-Kalima Academy will have the following programs:

I. Intercultural and Interreligious Studies Program

This program will be divided into two categories:

A. Interreligious Studies:

The subjects taught include:

Religion, Culture, Politics, Interreligious Dialogue and Identity issues

B. Intercultural Studies

1. Arabo-Islamic Studies
2. Euro-Mediterranean Studies
3. West-East Asian Studies
4. Women's Studies

II. Contextual Theology Program

Within this program a number of disciplines will be taught. These include:

Gospel and Culture; Christian Theology in Multi-cultural and Multi-religious Societies; Theology and Socio-Human Development; Liberation Theologies; Christian Education; Biblical Studies; The Scriptures in their Historical and Geographical Context; Palestinian History/Archaeology; Church History in the Non-Western World

III. Music and Art Program

Different arts will be taught in this program, including Music, Liturgy, Iconography, Calligraphy, Painting, Olivewood, Glass, Ceramics, etc.

Facilities

I. Downtown Campus- Madbassa Square

This campus will contain:

- a. Art Workshops
- b. Exhibition Hall
- c. Performance Hall
- d. Arts and Crafts Gift Shop
- e. Guesthouse
- f. Center for Alternative Tourism

II. Mountain Mureir Campus

1. Dar al-Kalima School
2. Communication Center
3. Music Center
4. Conference Center
5. Administrative Building
6. Open Amphitheater
7. Student and Faculty Accommodation Facilities
8. Landscaping and Gardens
9. Treatment Plant
10. Parking Facilities

Dar al-Kalima Concept Conference

In preparation for the project of Dar al-Kalima Academy, an international conference was held in October 7-14, 1997 to develop the theoretical concept for the Academy. At the same time, this conference was meant to serve as a networking forum for different organizations, which might be involved in the future programs of the Academy. The conference was attended by theologians, educators, and artists from Sweden, Germany, Switzerland, Brazil, USA, the Philippines, the Netherlands, Indonesia, India, Finland, and Palestine.



Lays the Cornerstone for Dar al-Kalima Academy



Under the patronage of His Excellency, **President Yasser Arafat**, the cornerstone for the Dar al-Kalima Academy was laid on Tuesday January 6, 1998. Dar al-Kalima Academy, which is one of the biggest projects for the **Bethlehem 2000** project, is a Palestinian institution that is mainly concerned with interreligious and intercultural dialogue as well as art and music.

The ceremony was held on **Jabal Mureir** in the presence of a large crowd that included Consuls and Representatives of foreign countries. Palestinian and Israeli Ministers, members of the Palestinian Legislative Council, the Governor of the Bethlehem district, the Mayor of Bethlehem, the CEO of the Bethlehem 2000 Steering Committee, as well as representatives of different local and international religious and popular authorities. **Bishop Munib Younan**, Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Palestine and Jordan, opened the ceremony by a speech in which he thanked President Arafat for his willingness to lay the cornerstone of the Academy and for the special attention that he has given to the project. Following, **Dr. Horst Freitag**, Head of the German Representative Office, thanked President Arafat for being instrumental in returning part of the land on which the Academy will be built. The British Government in the 1940s of this century confiscated the land, which was purchased by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the last century. He also pointed out to the meeting that President Arafat had in Bonn, Germany with the German Foreign Minister **Klaus Kinkel** in October 25, 1997, where President Arafat promised the backing of the Palestinian National Authority for this project. Dr. Freitag concluded his speech by saying that he hopes that many donors from the international community will support this worthy project. **Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb**, the founder of the Dar al-Kalima Academy, spoke next and outlined the goals of the Academy as well as the different facilities that it will contain.

Next, and amongst the enthusiastic applause of the crowd that gathered at the building site, President Arafat laid the cornerstone for the Academy as a sign of the importance of this institution to the city of Bethlehem in particular and for the Palestinian people in general. Finally, the ceremony was closed by the speech of His Grace **Bishop Christian Krause**, the President of the Lutheran World Federation. In his speech, Bishop Krause expressed his hope that this important institution would start its operation at the beginning of the Bethlehem 2000 celebrations. The ceremony, which was attended by people from over thirty countries, was widely covered by national and international media, including the Jordanian press, Israeli press, as well as the local and national Palestinian press.

The following is an excerpt of **Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb's** Speech, which he delivered at the ceremony.

*In less than two years, the city of Bethlehem will celebrate 2000 years of Christianity. Therefore, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Palestine and Jordan will establish an ecumenical institution, the **Dar al-Kalima Academy**, as a contribution to the **Bethlehem 2000** project. For us Bethlehem 2000 is not only about festivities and buildings. Rather, the **Dar al-Kalima** will be an institution that will empower our people to face the challenges of the twenty-first century.*

Dar al-Kalima** means the House of the Word, but not the words, since our people are fed up with rhetoric and speeches. The word means the Logos, or the power, which is shaping the world. It is the word that became flesh and tangible. (John 1:14) Al-Kalima is also the word used in the Quran to describe Christ (سورة النساء 170) **بِمَا نَسَخَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَكُنْتُمُ الْفَاقِقِينَ إِلَى مَرْيَمَ وَرُوحَ اللَّهِ

As an educational institution, the Academy will promote intercultural dialogue, contextual theology, music and art. The founding of the Academy in the city of Bethlehem is ideal, since Bethlehem was and continues to be a meeting place for people from all over the world. We do not want to build an ivory tower, but an institution that is open to all. Moreover, the city of Bethlehem was and remains an important Palestinian cultural center. It was here that the first song of the angels was sung, giving God the glory, proclaiming peace on earth, and good will to people. (Luke 2:13) The artistic and musical heritage of the area, which has inspired many, makes the city of Bethlehem an appropriate place for the creation of an infrastructure that would serve as the foundation for a growing artistic and musical movement, since today our world is shaped by sight and sound.

The Academy aims at accomplishing a number of things, including:

- * *Providing training for talented young Palestinians, since we believe that the success of the Bethlehem 2000 project will not be possible without human resources development.*
- * *Providing a forum for conferences, art exhibits, and music performances.*
- * *Contributing to the shaping of the Palestinian cultural identity.*
- * *Encouraging the establishment of a network between educators, musicians, artists, theologians, from around the world, since Palestine will have its future through its dialogue and communication with the rest of the world and not in isolation.*
- * *Contributing to the revival of old and the development of new theological traditions in the South in general, and in the West-Asian countries in particular, using a contextual and cross-cultural approach.*

Our vision might seem too big. However, we believe that God has put us at the right time (year 2000), in the right place (Bethlehem), and with the right people. Three years ago no one would have believed us if we talked about our plans for the year 2000. However, gradually we see that the Academy is taking shape. Our belief was and remains that whenever there is vision, will, and faith, combined with the right resources, we as Christians and us Palestinians can move mountains, not to say the Israeli Jabal Murcit mountain.

Teachers' Visit to Germany

During the period of June 5-24, 1997 the International Center of Bethlehem, and in cooperation with the Wilhelm-Löhe School in Nürnberg and the Köln-Bethlehem Twin Cities Association, organized for the teachers of the Evangelical Lutheran School in Bethlehem an educational visit to Germany. The goal of the trip was to strengthen the partnership relations between the Evangelical



Lutheran School in Bethlehem and the Wilhelm-Löhe School in Nürnberg as well as to give the teachers from Bethlehem the opportunity to visit different schools in Germany, which are implementing modern educational concepts and methodologies. There were three stops during this trip.

The first stop was in the city of Köln, where several educational institutions were visited. The second stop was in Nürnberg, where the teachers' families of the Wilhelm-Löhe School hosted the teachers from Bethlehem. In Nürnberg, the teachers had the possibility of visiting classes as well as several adult-education institutions in Bavaria. The highlight of this part of the trip was a visit to a school for children with asthma in Berchtesgaden. On Sunday, Dekan Johannes Friedrich hosted the group for the Sunday service, which was followed by lunch with representatives of the congregation there.

The third part was in Leipzig, where two major events took place. The first was a visit to the "Evangelisches Schulzentrum", which is an Evangelical school built after the unification of Germany. The second event was participating in the Evangelical Kirchentag, which is a bi-annual church gathering organized by the Evangelical churches in Germany. This visit, as a whole, was a step towards developing new ideas for the planned model school in Bethlehem.

Zivildienstleistende Gruppe Exchange Program

A group of six Palestinian young men and women visited Germany during the period of August 24 to September 13, 1997. The group comprised of three men and three women. The visit, which is part of an exchange program called the Zivildienstleistende Gruppe, has been going on for a



number of years. Through this exchange program, the International Center has been receiving a German group each year, where a program of voluntary work, visitations to archaeological and religious sites, and encounters with youth and other segments of Palestinian society are arranged by our Alternative Tourism program.

The first week of the Palestinian group's visit to Germany consisted of workshops, in which the Palestinian participants introduced Palestine, from different aspects, to the German group that was to come to Palestine in November 1997. During the second week of the trip, the Palestinian group was introduced to Germany through visitations to museums, art centers, and other cultural institutions. The group visited social institutions as well, including a farm that is operated by and for the benefit of physically and mentally disabled persons. Furthermore, the Palestinian group was introduced to the German-Jewish history, through visiting concentration camps. During the third and final week the members of the group had an unstructured program, where each participant arranged his/her schedule individually.

Palestinian-German Youth Exchange

A group of 10 Palestinian young men, under the leadership of our staff member Mr. Tony Nassar,



represented the International Center on a one-month visit to three cities in Germany in July 2-30, 1997. While in Germany, the group participated in a variety of activities that were sponsored by different German organizations. In Meissen, the first city to which the group went, German families hosted the group members. These home-stays gave the

Palestinian group an opportunity to learn first-hand about German society and culture. The program of the group in Meissen included meeting the German youth of the Church of Meissen, building fences for the church in Meissen, visitations, discussions, and sports activities such as hiking, swimming, and playing soccer.

The second city that the group visited was Nürnberg. There, the Palestinian group was sponsored by the Wilhelm-Löhe-Schule. While in Nürnberg, the group visited Wilhelm-Löhe school and spoke to the students about the educational and political situation in Palestine. Other activities that the group engaged in were visitations to factories and educational institutions, a center for deacons, as well as recreational activities. The last stop for the group was the city of Köln, which is a sister city to Bethlehem. The Municipality of Köln sponsored the program, which was mainly recreational. In Köln the group stayed at a guesthouse with three other groups from Italy, Germany, and Israel.

Summer School 1997

The 1997 summer school was held under the theme **Bethlehem 2000**. Seventy children participated in this summer school, which was four weeks long. Continuing a tradition that was started in the 1960s, the summer school in 1997 offered children between the ages of three to twelve a number of fun and educational activities. These activities were lead



by a team of Palestinian teachers and two volunteers from Germany. The main activities that the children participated in included music, dancing, sports, field trips, photography, and fine arts. The major outcome of the summer school was the models that the children built and the pictures that they took of Bethlehem. The theme of Bethlehem 2000 was deliberately chosen to invite the children of Bethlehem to think about and discover their own environment. One group of children constructed a model of Bethlehem from different materials like glass, cardboard, and Styrofoam. Another group went on a tour of the city and documented, through photography, some of the most interesting landmarks of Bethlehem. They used their trip and photos to build a model of the city. Another outcome of the summer school was the children's drawings that had city motifs. Some of these drawings were turned into postcards. The children also made a mosaic of the city from colored pieces of paper. Other highlights included sports competitions and weekly field trips. These trips were to the Jerusalem Zoo, the Shepherds Fields in Beit Sahour, a swimming pool in Beit Shemesh, and Cremisam Park in Beit Jala. The CVJM Maichingen and the Evangelical Church communities of Maichingen and Bondorf in Germany supported the summer school.

German Language Courses

Ms. Ruth Behringer offered two German language courses at the International Center of Bethlehem in 1997. The first was introductory German for beginners, and the second was intermediary German for the students who passed the first course.

Memberships and Associations

As part of its networking activity, the International Center of Bethlehem is a member of several regional and international organizations. One such regional organization is the Middle East Association for Training and Retreat Centers (MEATRC). The Association, which the International Center is one of its founding members, was established in 1994. This association comprises of centers in the Middle East that are working on implementing training programs as well as programs of social and religious concerns. The members of MEATRC hold annual meetings in Ayia Napa, Cyprus, where they exchange their experiences, discuss issues relevant to their work, and carry out networking activity. Currently, the International Center is in the process of joining the Association of Christian Institutes for Social Concern in Asia (ACISCA).

Alternative Guide Book to Bethlehem

An important center for Christianity, the ancient Biblical town of Bethlehem has a rich and live tradition that is worth preserving for posterity's sake. Tourism, which is the main industry in the Bethlehem area, is the fastest growing economic sector in the region as a whole. As part of its Alternative Tourism program, the International Center of Bethlehem is in the process of publishing an alternative guidebook to Bethlehem in German and English. This guidebook deals with the history of the city and gives an impression of the culture and life of Bethlehem's inhabitants. The German publishing house Palmyra will publish it in October 1998.

Currently, there are no recent coffee-table books on Bethlehem in the market. All previous works on the subject are either outdated, out of print, or do not give an accurate description of the area. These works also reflect an external perspective. With the transfer of government to the Palestinian Authority, the situation in Bethlehem is new and requires a different and an updated perspective. The fact that the earlier works on Bethlehem focused only on archeological and historical approaches makes it necessary to present the reader with an alternative view. A view that is comprehensive, integrating the contemporary with the historical, and encompassing the living stones along with the ancient ones.

In writing the guidebook, the methodology used was as follows:

- 1- A holistic approach was adopted, where the historical perspective was combined with the current reality.
- 2- A discussion of the political, economic, and religious aspects of the current reality was included.
- 3- The field of archaeology was combined with "human archaeology," meaning that we included a study of both the living and the dead stones.
- 4- An ecumenical perspective (Christian/Muslim/Jewish) as well as an inter-denominational Christian one was maintained.

This book will fill the gap in the literature on the subject. It will explore the new trends that are developing and the boundaries that have been crossed. Trends and boundaries that so far have not been included in the discussion but which promise to occupy a visible and permanent part of Bethlehem's history.

One objective behind writing this Guide Book is to have it as part of the **Bethlehem 2000** project, which has been organized to promote the city of Bethlehem to the rest of the world. Another objective is to have this book become an authoritative source for the visitors of Bethlehem who are seeking a full experience of their surroundings and the cultural background of the place.

There are two main groups that will benefit from this project. The first group is the Palestinians in general and the Bethlehemites in particular. The culture and history of this group have for ages been distorted by works of others, who did not have the cultural perspective and the understanding needed to give a clear explanation of the Palestinian and the Bethlehemite experience.

The second group of beneficiaries are the readers themselves, who will gain a better understanding of Bethlehem and its cultural heritage. The readers that we are targeting consist of the traditional tourists and pilgrims to the Holy Land as well as visitors to Bethlehem, especially those coming to the International Center of Bethlehem who are mainly interested in exploring different aspects of Palestinian life. Other readers are those who may not have visited Bethlehem or this country, but who are still interested in this part of the world for a variety of reasons.

A Study on Interreligious Marriage

Dr. Ibrahim Ata has conducted a study on interreligious marriages in Palestine and their effect on children's education. A sample of 150 married couples from all over the West Bank were interviewed for the study. The findings of Dr. Ata will be published by the International Center during the year 1998.

"Hermeneutics From the Periphery" Conference

In preparation for Dar al-Kalima Academy, the International Center of Bethlehem is planning a theological workshop on the issue of "Hermeneutics from the Periphery". This workshop will focus on reading the Bible from the perspective of those who have been oppressed by the usage of the Bible. The workshop will address the issue from a cross-cultural perspective, focusing on the experiences of both the African American and the Palestinian people.

Arts and Crafts Gift Shop

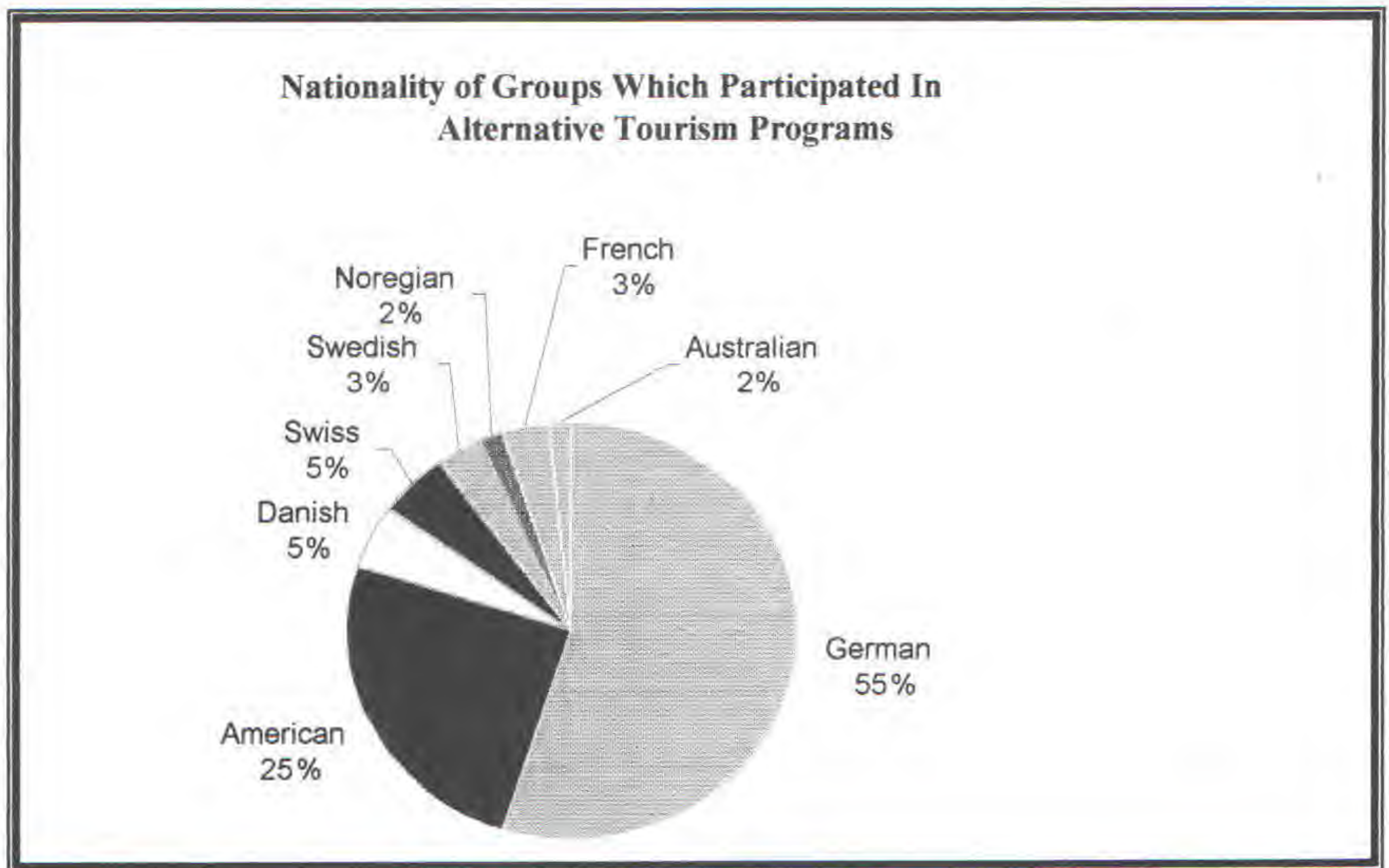
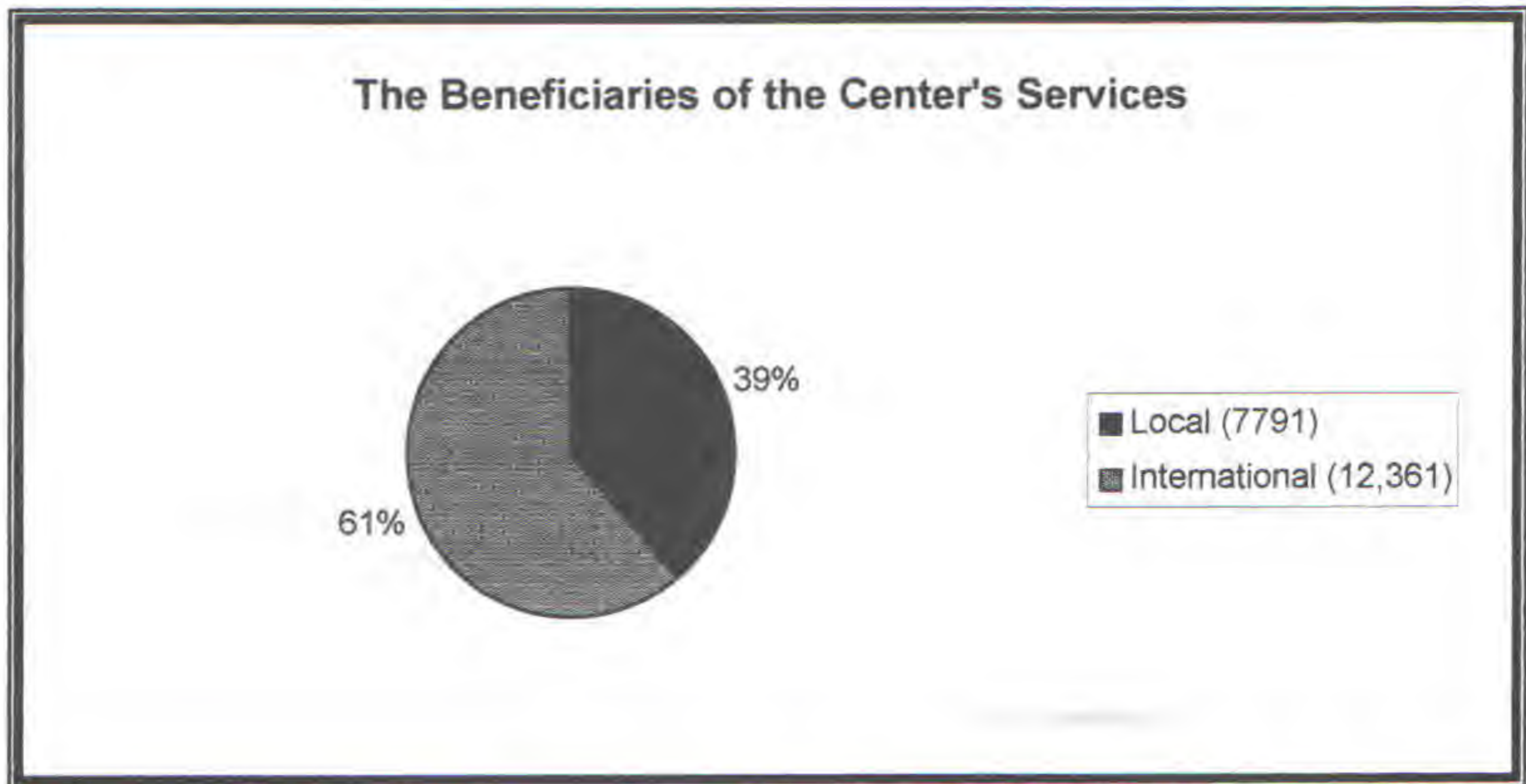
The International Center of Bethlehem intends to open an arts and crafts gift shop, where local artists and musicians can market their products. The Gift Shop will be a qualitative and not a quantitative alternative to souvenir shops. The Gift Shop is located in al-Madbassa square, which is part of the new touristic route that will undergo a renovation process in 1998 as part of the **Bethlehem 2000** project.

Women's Café

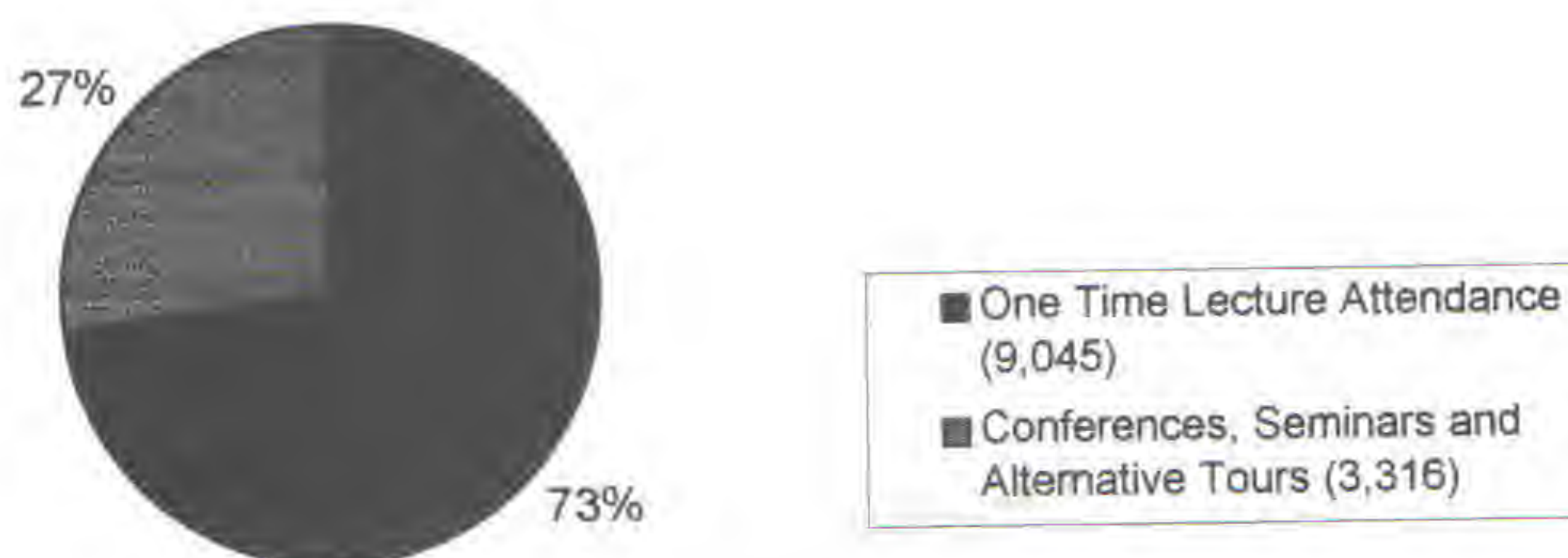
The aim of this project is to establish a coffee shop that is managed entirely by women, for the benefit of women. The project is part of the International Center of Bethlehem's attempt, especially the Women Studies Department, to get involved in the development of the Palestinian economy, taking into account the important role that women can play in this development as well as their employment needs. Therefore, this café will create job opportunities for women and serve also as a meeting place for them to relax and enjoy their free time. The coffee shop will also be opened for men. We envision that women who have different vocations, needs, and backgrounds will use this coffee shop. Gathering these women at one place will help create a network for them. This is particularly significant for businesswomen, who would like to network and meet other women to discuss business in a relaxed atmosphere.

The main goals of the women's café are:

1. Find new income-generating sources for women.
2. Encourage women to enter a new job market that has been traditionally the preserve of men.
3. Create places for women where they can spend their free time, and at the same time socialize within a socially sanctioned atmosphere, given the still traditional nature of our society.
4. Help the Alternative Tourism program that we have at the Center. The Abu Gubran guesthouse, which does have a dining room, lacks a space that can be converted into a coffee shop. The tourists who visit our Center or who stay at the Abu Gubran hostel can enjoy the services of this coffee shop and at the same time they will be one of its sources of income.



International Beneficiaries



Country Of International Beneficiaries

(One Time Lecture Attendance as well as those Participating in Conferences, Seminars and Alternative Tours)

<u>Country</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Country</u>
Germany	7734	India	76
USA	2570	Austria	63
Switzerland	546	Canada	31
Norway	299	Spain	5
Sweden	273	Italy	4
The United Kingdom	177	The Netherlands	3
Australia	159	Indonesia	1
Finland	157	The Philippines	1
Denmark	137	Brazil	1
France	123	Lithuania	1
		Total	12,361

CENTER'S ANNUAL ACTIVITIES REPORT JANUARY 1 - DECEMBER 31, 1997

Topic	Title	Speaker/Partner	Date	Audience
Lectures	"Women and Civil Law"	Ms. Salwa Abu Hashish, Attorney at Law	30/1	30
	"The Image of the Arab in Israeli Literature"	Mr. Yusuf Najajreh	7/2	42
	"Stille Zeile Sechs"	Ms. Monika Maron, novelist	11/4	28
	"The Role of the PNA in the Bethlehem 2000 Project"	Mr. Smirat	9/5	35
	"Interfaith Marriages in Palestine"	Rev. Dr. Raheb	15/8	39
	"The Role of the UNDP in the Bethlehem 2000 Project"	Mr. Youil Anastas	2/9	23
	"Violence in the Family"	Rev. Dr. Raheb & Sheikh Tamimi	23/10	75
	"Marcion, Muhammad and the Mahatma"	Professor Heikki Raisanen	29/10	25
	"Conflict Resolution"	Mr. Nuh Salameh	21/11	45
	"The AIDS Disease: Symptoms and Protection Methods"	Mr. Jawad Abu Dayyeh & Mr. Nidal Alan	5/12	48
	"Pictures of Assisi"	Andreas Kuntz	23/12	12
Lectures to Foreign Groups: In German In English	Topics included: "Political Situation in Palestine" "Palestinian Christians" "Bethlehem 2000" "Work of the Center" "Palestinian Women"	Center's Staff	Throughout the year	15-100/ lecture
Workshops	Methodology of Religious Education	Professor Harry Wendt	27-28/2	15

CENTER'S ANNUAL ACTIVITIES REPORT JANUARY 1- DECEMBER 31, 1997

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Speaker/Partner</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Audience</i>
	Storytelling Through Painting	Mr. Bofinger	15/4	45
	Children's Summer Camp: Theme "Bethlehem 2000"	Mr. Hanna Salameh, Ms. Renate Heike, Ms. Samar Ghattas, Dr. Khoulood Duaibis, Mr. Deeb Maliha, Mr. Suhail Surur	1/7-2/8	70
	Art Workshop for Children-I	Sunbula Institute & Wasiti Center	14-27/7	15
	Art History Workshop for Children-II	Ms. Samar Ghattas & Ms. Faten Anastas	15/9-20/10	13
	"Future of Religion"	Several Local and International Scholars	9/12	16
	Storytelling for Children	Mr. Stefan Slupetzky	16/12	87
	Politics and the Media	Union of Palestinian Journalists	18/12	54
	Brain Storming: Qis wa Nabi	Several	15/3	29
Cultural Events	National Music Conservatory Opening Concert	National Music Conservatory	15/4	80
	Jazz Music Concert	Mr. Jan Bernsten	26/4	19
	Frankfurter Book Fair	Frankfurter Buchmesse & Goethe Institute & German Representative Office in Jenicho	23-30/4	Approximately 1000 People
	Choir Concert.	Ensemble Vocatta Melanchthon Choir Mannheim	30/5	20
	Play: "Shu'un Abu Shakir 97"	Ashtar theater group	17/7	71
	Film: "The Veiled Hope"	Director: Ms. Norma Murqus	24/10	29
	Palestinian Cultural Evenings	Dabke Troupe of the Lutheran School in Beit Sahour	Throughout the year	25-80/ Performance
	German Literature and Movie Evenings	Ms. Gabrielle Füllkrug	Wednesdays- throughout the year	8-20/evening

CENTER'S ANNUAL ACTIVITIES REPORT, JANUARY 1- DECEMBER 31, 1997

Topic	Title	Speaker/Partner	Date	Audience
Language Courses	Hebrew Course- Introductory Level	Mr. Yusuf Najajreh	1/3-1/5	14
	German Language Course- Introductory Level	Ms. Ruth Bähringer	5/8-5/10	8
	German Language Course- Intermediate Level	Ms. Ruth Bähringer	5/8-5/10	6
Conferences and Seminars				
Women in the Family, Church, and Society	"The Situation of Women in the Family, Church and Society"	Several	22-28/3	26
Women in Politics	"Women and Political Culture in Palestine and Germany: Experiences, Strategies and Perspectives"	Goethe Institute-Jerusalem & Heinrich Böll Foundation	3-10/4	25
Trilateral Exchange Conference Between Palestine-Germany-France	Which Engagement for Which Future?	Several	16-26/5	21
German-Palestinian Youth Conference in Meissen, Nürnberg and Köln	Meetings, discussions, volunteer work, and sightseeing.	Church of Meissen, Wilhelm-Löhe School in Nürnberg, and the Municipality of Köln	2-30/6	24
Teachers' Conference in Germany	"Concepts and Models of Developmental Education"	Several Educators from Universities and Schools in Germany	5-24/6	7
Zivildienstleistende Gruppe Exchange Program in Germany	"Water Situation in Palestine"	Several	24/8- 13/9	30
Dar al-Kalima Concept Conference	Developing the Theoretical Concept for Dar al-Kalima Academy	Several	7-14/10	25
Alternative Tourism	"Destination Christmas"	Several organizations from Palestine, France, Italy, Finland, and Russia	15-17/12	32
Reintegration Program	Sightseeing Tour to Acko and Haifa	-----	22/6	45

CENTER'S ANNUAL ACTIVITIES REPORT JANUARY 1- DECEMBER 31, 1997

Topic	Title	Speaker/Partner	Date	Audience
	Awareness Campaign for the Renovation of the Old Market	Graduates Club Committee for the Bethlehem 2000 project	18/10	11
	Graduates' Club Regular Meeting	Several	bi-weekly throughout the year	25-140
	Palestinian Folklore Dancing Graduates Club Dabke Troupe	-----	Mondays throughout the year	14
	Graduates Club Committee for the Bethlehem 2000 Project	-----	bi-weekly throughout the year	7
	Graduates Club Committee Singing Group	-----	Wednesdays- Throughout the year	15



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