



FRANCISCAN FOUNDATION FOR THE HOLY LAND

# PROGRAM SUMMARY

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SAFEGUARDING THE CHRISTIAN  
PRESENCE IN THE HOLY LAND







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# THE CHALLENGE

The Christian population in the Holy Land has undergone a drastic decline, plummeting from 20% – 25% in the 1950s to less than 2% today. This decline is fueled by a range of factors, encompassing economic challenges, cultural preservation, stability-seeking, educational aspirations and religious-political complexities. Together, these elements shape an intricate landscape influencing Christian departure, endangering the community's future and heritage. Economic struggles have led nearly 60% of Christians to contemplate emigration, accentuating the urgency of job opportunities and economic support to safeguard the Christian presence and its vital mission despite this disconcerting trend.





# CHRISTIAN STUDENT EDUCATION PROGRAMS



At the beginning of the 20th century, Christians accounted for a quarter of the population in the Holy Land. Today, they account for less than 2%. The Christian exodus from the Holy Land can be attributed in large part to a lack of higher education. Without access to higher education, Christians face difficulties in securing meaningful employment, which leads to a lifetime of financial struggles. Solving this education gap begins with ensuring younger generations have access to higher education.

The Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land (FFHL) provides financial assistance for higher education, which leads to economic advancement and stability for the Christian population in the Holy Land. The University Scholarship Program is the cornerstone of the solution for the Christian population's success in the Holy Land.

Since 1997, FFHL has granted millions of dollars in university scholarships and educational grants to Christian students, embodying a commitment to nurturing the Holy Land's educational future.

# UNIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The FFHL Scholarship Program offers essential funding for four years of university study, covering tuition and books. Hundreds of economically marginalized students have been granted full scholarships, achieving an impressive 97% graduation rate. This program supports both bachelor's (four years) and master's degrees, encompassing diverse fields such as Law, Medicine, Engineering and Business Administration. Tuition costs range from \$4,000 to \$6,000 per student annually.



## ENCOURAGING GROWTH AND BUILDING FAITH

In a challenging area like the Holy Land, local communities work hard to preserve their Christian heritage. FFHL helps by supporting education and community development. Sponsoring motivated young Christians helps create a brighter future for the Holy Land. These students can become important members of their communities. The average yearly college cost in the Holy Land is \$6,000, much lower than the \$34,000 in the U.S. Investing in these students ensures a better future for Christianity.

Since 1997, the Scholarship Program has made a significant investment, leading to graduates finding professional jobs. These individuals proudly represent FFHL's impact, fostering a sense of community and gratitude. Sponsors who support these aspiring leaders empower a generation that has the potential to make a positive impact on the Holy Land's future.

## OUR PARTNERING UNIVERSITIES

Bethlehem University | Birzeit University | Al-Quds University  
An-Najah National University | Hebrew University | Ono Academic College  
Azrieli College of Engineering Jerusalem | Hadassah Academic College  
Reichman University (IDC Hertzliya University) | Technion, Israel Institute of Technology



# ELEMENTARY & HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION PROGRAM

FFHL's Elementary and High School Education Program addresses education gaps in communities where financial constraints hinder parents' ability to provide for their children. Operating in areas like Jericho, Jerusalem and Nazareth, the program aims to offer quality education while instilling vital values. It caters to economically and physically disadvantaged individuals, embracing newcomers as well. The curriculum combines Christian principles with global awareness, enabling students to make informed choices for peace and development.

*"With tolerance and coexistence comes the stage of equality where one accepts the other as he is with all his rights and privileges. In many ways, the future is linked with and dependent upon this type of education."*

– FR. PETER F. VASKO, OFM

## EMPOWERING FUTURES, STRENGTHENING FAITH

The Elementary and High School Education Program holds significant importance as it breaks down barriers to education caused by financial struggles. By providing accessible quality education, the program not only imparts knowledge but also fosters Christian values and community engagement. It promotes inclusivity, benefiting those in need while leaving a lasting impact on students' lives. Your support directly contributes to the future of Christianity in the Holy Land, offering children the tools to navigate life with integrity and compassion.





## VOCATIONAL & TECHNICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

FFHL's Vocational and Technical Education Program offers vital support for a two-year skills training curriculum, covering tuition and materials. Students delve into practical fields such as plumbing, carpentry, auto mechanics, culinary arts, and more. Partnering with renowned institutions like the Lutheran World Federation Vocational Training Center and Notre Dame of Jerusalem Center, this initiative provides a pathway for Holy Land Christians to attain proficiency in trades that provide a stable and sustainable income.

### *DEVELOPING SKILLS AND BUILDING BONDS*

FFHL's commitment to Christians in the Holy Land extends beyond traditional education. Recognizing the importance of vocational skills, the program has broadened to help students to master crafts to become skilled plumbers, electricians and more. These vocational scholarships not only transform dreams into reality; they also promote understanding between different cultures. Even though the program is only for Christians, it strives to promote unity by connecting with other communities. Many beneficiaries wouldn't receive this training otherwise, highlighting the program's crucial importance.

*"The support from America and other countries is very important.  
We can see that with nearly 90% of our graduates working."*

– FR. PETER F. VASKO, OFM

In addition to teaching skills, the program creates a feeling of connection and belonging among Christians in the Holy Land. By supporting and elevating these communities, investing in vocational education not only gives young people practical abilities but also enhances their relationships and understanding within the diverse Holy Land.



# MAGNIFICAT INSTITUTE MUSIC SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The Magnificat Institute in Jerusalem provides opportunities for young musicians to learn piano, violin, flute, or composition. It aims to promote peace and understanding among children from various cultural and religious backgrounds. The curriculum emphasizes academic diplomas acknowledged in the European Union and encourages cultural exchange and dialogue.



## MELODIES OF UNITY AND PEACE

The Magnificat Institute, founded in 1995 by Father Armando Pierucci and currently managed by the Custody of the Holy Land, exemplifies unity across cultural and religious divides. With students from Jewish, Muslim, Christian, and Palestinian backgrounds, the Institute employs music as a powerful tool to bring hearts and minds together.

FFHL plays a crucial role in sustaining this impactful program by granting scholarships to talented young Christians. The Magnificat Institute not only trains future music educators but also gives students opportunities to perform in Holy Land shrines and parishes. These performances break barriers and encourage positive relationships among different communities.

The Magnificat Institute trains educators to cultivate music appreciation in schools, showcasing student performances in Holy Land shrines and parishes. It encourages cross-cultural friendships and peaceful interactions, as well as breaks down barriers of culture, religion, and language, presenting opportunities for a harmonious future. Top performing majors include violin, piano, cello, flute and composition.

*The institute's primary mission is to establish a profound connection among diverse backgrounds through the universal language of music, promoting a future of coexistence and understanding. Your generous support plays a vital role in realizing this mission.*

# CHRISTIAN HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMS



With Christians comprising less than 2% of the Holy Land's population, FFHL's humanitarian efforts aim to prevent further displacement and sustain the Christian community. By offering essential support, these programs stabilize families, encouraging them to preserve their Christian heritage through love, faith and hope.

FFHL is committed to raising awareness about human rights challenges faced by Holy Land Christians. Our mission includes promoting equal opportunities and safeguarding the right of Christians to remain in their homeland. As a minority group, Christians often bear the brunt of political crises in the Middle East and suffer disproportionately during conflicts between Palestinian and Israeli interests.





## FRANCISCAN BOYS HOME

Located in the city of Bethlehem, this home takes care of Christian children with special circumstances. The program assists those who struggle with serious social, psychological and economic problems and provides them with a safe and loving shelter.

### *PRESERVING FAITH AND FAMILY*

In the Holy Land, Christian families face local and societal challenges. The Franciscan Boys Home provides crucial support by offering a safe environment for children in need. It ensures their safety and provides care when they're going through uncertain times. The Home assists boys ages 6 to 18, helping them deal with challenges while maintaining strong family connections.

Additionally, the caring staff teach valuable life lessons like the importance of hard work, love and forgiveness. The Franciscan Boys Home is dedicated to improving lives by creating a welcoming and protective atmosphere. The boys' home plays an important role in assisting young individuals and showcasing the resilience of the Christian community in the Holy Land.



# CHILDREN WITHOUT BORDERS

The Children Without Borders program utilizes soccer as a platform to develop connections among diverse youth, instilling values of peace, coexistence and gender equality. This initiative creates a safe and meaningful space for children after school, enabling them to discover talents and embrace vital principles like peace, liberty and cooperation through the joy of sports.



## *SHAPING PEACEFUL FUTURES*

In a region marked by complexities, Children Without Borders plays a significant role in bridging divides. By employing the “Six C’s” framework — Critical thinking, Creativity, Cooperation, Co-existence, Commitment, and Courage — the program teaches not just soccer skills, but also essential life values.

This effort is particularly significant considering the Holy Land’s socio-political challenges, which often marginalize children. Through fun activities like the Folkloric Dance Dabkeh group and the football team, this program helps children see things differently and become strong leaders who strive for peace and seek to communicate together. With FFHL’s help, Children Without Borders brings together over 400 kids in Jerusalem and Bethlehem. In spite of challenges, this program creates a peaceful and cooperative space where children can learn and grow. This program does not just teach valuable lessons; it is also a safe place for kids to discover their talents and understand that they have a purpose.





## CHILDREN'S MARCH FOR PEACE

The Children's March for Peace brings together children from Bethlehem and Jerusalem, promoting a shared sense of achievement while advocating for peace. This festive event, held during Christmas, encourages unity through gift exchanges, games and performances. White balloons ascend from Manger Square, symbolizing peace and freedom. In 2008, FFHL proudly began sponsoring this meaningful initiative at the request of Jerusalem's parish priests.

### *PROMOTING UNITY, CELEBRATING HERITAGE*

Since its inception in 2003, the March for Peace nurtures friendships among Holy Land children, providing them a day of joy amidst the Nativity story's historical backdrop. The event enhances local unity, deepening the shared Christian heritage and fostering a sense of identity within the Holy Land.

Inaugurated by Bethlehem's Mayor, the Minister of Tourism, and guided by Fr. Ibrahim Faltas OFM and Fr. Peter F. Vasko OFM, President of FFHL, the March stands as a testament to the Holy Land's commitment to peace and shared celebration.







## CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

The Children's Christmas Program in Bethlehem carries the spirit of Christ's birth to a walled city, reaffirming hope in the face of challenges. With the support of FFHL supporters, this initiative annually provides gifts to over 900 Bethlehem children and hosts a community Christmas musical, spreading joy and happiness.

### *MAINTAINING JOY, AMPLIFYING LIGHT*

In the heart of Bethlehem, where Christ was born, this program brings hope. Festive gifts and community celebrations bring joy to children who may be facing economic struggles. Dedicated supporters lead this effort, showing how committed and caring people keep Christ's light shining, even in challenging circumstances.





# CHRISTIAN SOCIAL SERVICES SUPPORT

The Franciscan Social Services Organization (FSSO), supported by FFHL, extends aid to vulnerable individuals and families in Bethlehem, offering vital financial, medical and social environment assistance. Through home visits and guidance from parish priests, FSSO reaches out to impoverished households, aiming to uplift those in need.



## *SUPPORTING FAMILIES, RESTORING DIGNITY*

FFHL works with FSSO to provide resources to Christians in the Holy Land, funding medicine, regular support and important services. FFHL also assists those affected by the crises who are unable to leave home or have lost their jobs. Christian Family Centers in Bethlehem and Nazareth, supported by FFHL, make a significant difference by restoring dignity, supporting progress and building community. This partnership changes lives, aids families, and keeps Christianity strong, making life better for everyone in the Holy Land.

# JOB PLACEMENT PROGRAM

The Job Placement Program is a humanitarian initiative aimed at assisting Christians. By offering job search support, interview training and skill development, this program aims to secure employment opportunities and financial stability. Collaborating with employers, the program bridges the gap between job seekers and meaningful work.



## *OVERCOMING OBSTACLES, CHANGING LIVES*

In an area relying on tourism, this program is vital for Arab Christians. It allows them to spread the Gospel while working in roles like guides, drivers, managers and shop owners. The Job Placement Program helps remove obstacles, creating chances for growth and community strength. It works together with FFHL's housing projects, getting skilled Palestinians involved in renovations and jobs. The Franciscans continue providing opportunities, as seen with the Franciscan Press supporting workers during slow times.



# HOUSING PROGRAMS



FFHL provides critical, life-sustaining opportunities to Christians in the Holy Land by partnering with Christian construction companies to develop apartment buildings and repair homes in Bethlehem and surrounding areas. Through this effort, the Foundation creates job opportunities for local Palestinian Christians and improves living conditions for residents.





# HOUSING RENOVATION & RESTORATION

The Housing Renovation and Restoration Program is dedicated to creating safe and improved housing solutions for Holy Land Christians.

## *RESTORING HOMES, BUILDING RESILIENCE*

In Bethlehem and nearby areas, many homes urgently need repair. FFHL's Franciscan Family Center runs the Emergency Job Creation Program, providing jobs for local Palestinian Christians and upgrading living conditions. A project director oversees this program by identifying urgent cases and assessing needs.

In an unpredictable region, the program provides hope and develops strength. The goal is to create better futures for Christian Holy Land families.





# SUBSIDIZED HOUSING

Subsidized Housing is a key initiative by FFHL to support Christian families in the Holy Land. FFHL is deeply committed to ensuring that Christian families have access to affordable housing. Collaborating with Christian construction firms, FFHL focuses on developing two and three-bedroom apartment buildings. These efforts are aimed at creating numerous subsidized housing units in areas like Bethpage, Jericho, Beit-Hanina, Nazareth and Bethlehem.



## *PROVIDING HOMES, BUILDING HOPE*

The drive for a brighter future fuels these endeavors. Subsidized housing offers a range of benefits, including addressing the high cost of land for Christian families and providing shelter for uprooted Christians without a home. It also alleviates the burden of high unemployment and unaffordable rent. Completed projects stand as a testament to FFHL's commitment to creating vibrant, supportive communities for Holy Land Christians.

These projects serve dual purposes, offering not only homes but also employment opportunities and convenient access to shopping, addressing the challenges of restricted mobility.

# LEGACY PROGRAMS



FFHL's legacy programs are crucial for sustaining our humanitarian efforts to support Christians in the Holy Land. The Foundation's efforts focusing on land costs, displaced families and unemployment, depend on ongoing donor support.



# GOOD SHEPHERD SOCIETY

FFHL established the Good Shepherd Society to combat the exodus of Christians from the region and ensure the continuity of our mission. This visionary initiative empowers donors to create enduring change by supporting FFHL through their estate plans. By leaving a legacy gift, the Good Shepherd Society positively impacts the lives of Holy Land Christians and actively works to protect the historic landmarks of the region.



## LEGACY GIVING

Joining our Legacy Society is easy and meaningful. A commitment to our mission through a planned gift, regardless of its size, grants automatic membership. Personal preferences, such as anonymity or sharing information, are respected. Whether you reach out by phone, email or online form, your wishes will be honored. As a valued member, you will receive exclusive recognition and updates on special events, keeping you connected to our mission's progress.

## GIVING OPTIONS

Bequest in a Will | Charitable Trust | Life Insurance Beneficiary  
Retirement Plan Beneficiary | Family Foundation Beneficiary

# MAINTENANCE OF THE HOLY SITES

FFHL's dedication to preserving the Holy Land's heritage is evident through ongoing funding for the maintenance of significant Holy Sites, notably the Church of the Holy Sepulchre—where Jesus Christ was crucified, buried and resurrected. Preserving and maintaining these sites is crucial to protect the Holy Land's valuable religious and cultural heritage. With the help of our loyal donors, FFHL can ensure the necessary funding for regular costs and important upkeep, securing the sanctity of these revered places.



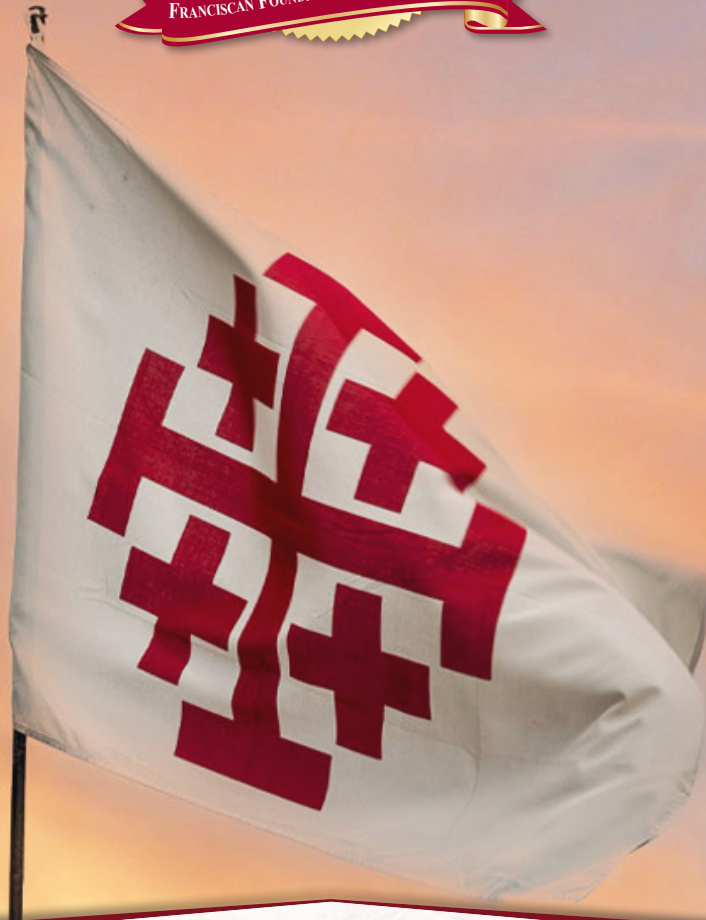
## *SAFEGUARDING HISTORY AND FOSTERING FAITH*

At the heart of FFHL's commitment lies its contribution to the Custody's Foundation, which funds the regular monthly expenses of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and other revered Holy Sites. This church holds immense significance as the place where Jesus Christ was buried and resurrected, serving as a focal point during FFHL's pilgrimages, where people show deep respect and spirituality.

Protecting Christian Holy Sites in Israel is crucial as it helps keep a strong connection for Christians by safeguarding important history and culture. It also promotes peace among various faiths, supports local economies through tourism, preserves religious freedom and represents communities' identities. These sites offer essential educational resources, aid in global understanding and unity, and ensure that the heritage of Christianity remains for future generations.







## CONTACT US

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### GENERAL INQUIRIES

[INFO@FFHL.ORG](mailto:INFO@FFHL.ORG) | (855) 500-3345

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT [FFHL.ORG](http://FFHL.ORG).