

Seeking Light Through Creative Expression

Peace & Global Witness Offering helps address anxiety and foster creativity through new arts and culture program in Lebanon

Beirut's 2020 port explosions shattered Nada Raphael's world. The devastating blast that tore through the port area of Beirut — one of the largest non-nuclear explosions in history — left hundreds dead, thousands injured, an estimated 300,000 people homeless and artists like Raphael psychically wounded.

"Beirut is my city," said the Lebanese-born photographer, videographer and journalist. "Its pain [is] my pain. I felt the aftermath of the explosion in every bone of my body and I wanted to show this. I want to make sure we will remember. I consider we have a duty to remember what happened and to never forget."

And now, through a unique program called NABAD, Nada and a host of artists across Lebanon have a new platform through which the memory of the port explosions may be preserved, the resulting trauma processed and some measure of healing achieved by seeking light through creative expression.

NABAD — an innovative program launched by Dar al-Kalima University College of Arts and Culture in response to the tragedy in Beirut — aims to empower artists, arts organizations and creative enterprises in Southwestern Asia and North Africa. Dar al-Kalima, established in 2006 in Bethlehem, Palestine, focuses its educational objectives on the performing arts, visual arts and cultural heritage. With needed support, artists are able to adapt and share creative ways to keep people connected.

Dar al-Kalima is supported in part by the Peace & Global Witness Offering, which promotes the peace of Christ by addressing systems of conflict and injustice across the world. Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb, president of Dal al-Kalima states, "The support of the Offering is very crucial especially at times when everything is falling apart and people in the region feel abandoned. This support is a sign that we are not forsaken or forgotten."

The Offering is unique in that half of it goes to the national church to foster peace globally, 25% percent is retained by congregations for local peace and reconciliation work, and 25% goes to mid councils for similar ministries on the regional level.

Artistic expression and movements for peace and justice often sing together, dance together, seek the light of peace together — and point us to God's peace-creating presence in our midst. "Art and culture help us not to forget that we are all connected and all similar, in spite of all our differences," said Nada. "It helps connect humans in different countries and continents. It helps us grow as individuals and learn from one another. It helps us try and challenge our own misconceptions and biases. Art and culture have made us feel less alone, less isolated."

Please give generously and help facilitate the healing some communities need.

Let us pray:

Creative God, you painted the skies and filled the world with song. Inspire your people to imagine your peace, fashioned by all our gifts and all our imaginings offered together. Amen.