



OCTOBER 7TH

A YEAR IN REVIEW



Welcome to this special edition magazine, where we take a moment to reflect on the past year and review CMJ's work and impact during one of the most challenging periods in recent memory. This issue highlights not only the difficulties we've faced as a community in Israel but also the incredible ways in which God has worked through our ministry to bring hope and healing to those affected by conflict.

Through stories of perseverance, faith, and compassion, we aim to share with you the journey we've walked together—showcasing how CMJ has continued to serve, even in the face of sorrow and uncertainty.

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IN THE FACE OF SORROW & LOSS

**CN. DARYL
FENTON, CMJ
ISRAEL DIRECTOR**

October 7th marks the anniversary of a terrible evil committed in the name of god. Its consequences still bring deep sorrow, and ongoing hostility threatens to increase that pain. At CMJ in Israel, our mission is to bring hope, love, and the light of God to all those affected by this continuing conflict.

During the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Lord challenged us through His word to reconsider CMJ's purpose and work in Israel. The answer was clear: we were called to build and strengthen communities of disciples across the nation. As a team, we worked hard to define and then begin developing these communities, aiming to equip them to bless those around them. The outbreak of terror and war only reinforced our commitment to this mission, deepening our conviction of bringing hope and light to those in need.

This crisis has accelerated our efforts to realize our vision as quickly as possible. The challenges of the past year have been a refining process, and the months ahead seem even more perilous. But by the Lord's power and grace, we will face these challenges. We will share updates on the work He has given us and the places He has put us knowing that your continued prayers are essential to the work ahead.

At the core of our prayer is the hope that the Lord will continue to grow strong local communities of faith—communities that worship together, work together, and bear witness together. This is the foundation of the calling the Lord has given all His disciples, and it can only be fulfilled as we grow closer to Him and obey His will.

Amid the shock of terror, the likelihood of

regional war grows, along with the renewed hostility toward the Jewish people worldwide.

This intensifies the urgency of our calling as those who uphold the Lord's name and live out His will. While I may not be able to fully express the weight of this reality, I trust in the Holy Spirit, our Comforter, to guide us and fill in where my words fall short. Below, we share some moments that have shaped the path ahead for us:

- *A young wife among us endured sleepless nights as her husband fought from house to house, securing the way for other soldiers.*
- *An Arab mother, disciplined through our Arabic broadcast, fled Gaza with her surviving children after the conflict took the lives of others.*
- *Responding to Jewish friends who ask why they are being hated and blamed for evils they did not start.*
- *Answering Arab friends who ask why their innocent loved ones must suffer.*

These questions have no easy answers. It seems likely that many more months of conflict and heartache lie ahead. To be clear, we at CMJ will need your dedicated intercessory prayers—for strength, for "peace not as this world gives," for unrelenting compassion for a steady, loving witness, and for worship and gratitude even in the face of sorrow and loss.

Only the Lord is sufficient for this task, and His power is released through prayer. Please pay close attention to the prayer letters we will send, so that together we can cooperate with the Lord in bringing good out of this sorrow. Already, we have felt the strengthening effects of your prayers and continue to draw hope from them.



From the very outset of CMJ's permanent presence in the land of Israel in 1833 there has been violence, conflict and war. Already in 1834 there was a revolt against the newly installed regime from Egypt, which imposed harsh policies in the land after conquering it from the Turks. At one-point marauders entered the home of CMJ's John Nicolayson and were about to kill him when he was recognised by a local Arab who 'proclaimed him as a man of the book.' Following this traumatic experience, Nicolayson and his family took a brief break from Jerusalem.

In 1840 there was further conflict when the Egyptians, with French support, set out to topple the Ottoman Empire. The European powers, led by Britain, opposed this and again there was conflict. Being a British subject, it would have been expedient for Nicolayson to depart – but he remained steadfast at his post. These actions by Nicolayson set the tone for CMJ's commitment to remain in the land during times of conflict. One exception was the First World War when the Turks aligned themselves with Germany. While the British staff were compelled to depart, local Hebrew Christians kept the work limping along as the Turks commandeered many of the CMJ buildings.

Following the British conquest and the subsequent issuing of the Balfour Declaration promising a Jewish national home in the land and its official endorsement by the League of Nations, there was intermittent conflict.

During the Nebi Musa pogrom of 1920 British soldiers were in a service at Christ Church and rushed out to stop further Jewish bloodshed. During the 1921 May Day riot in Tel Aviv-Jaffa, many Jewish people sheltered in CMJ buildings, protected by British soldiers. Two Hebrew Christians in Jaffa were surrounded by a mob, but an Arab recognised them as belonging to 'the English Church' and they were saved.



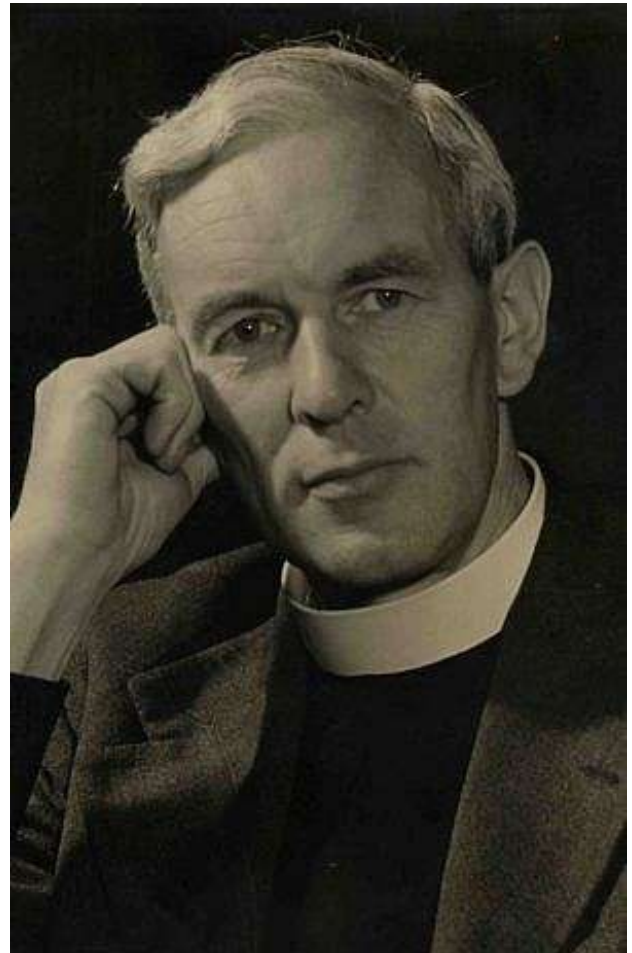
Jordanian soldiers outside Christ Church during the Six Day War.

During the terrible 1929 pogrom, Jewish casualties were brought to CMJ's English Mission Hospital (site of the present-day Anglican and Makor Hatikvah schools). When the British authorities succeeded in quelling the disturbances they requisitioned several CMJ buildings as the British military presence in the land thereafter increased.

Tensions increased during the 1930s, yet the CMJ schools (serving Jewish, Arab and Armenian girls) in both Jerusalem and Jaffa continued to operate. In 1937 the British Army commandeered the CMJ school in Jaffa (present-day Beit Immanuel). That year the riots were very intense and Mrs Hishmeh, wife of the CMJ evangelist in Jaffa, was shot dead by Jewish extremists while travelling on a bus to Jerusalem. In 1938, the Old City was taken by Arab rebels for a period and activities at Christ Church had to be curtailed. In 1939, Abraham Davidson, the verger of Christ Church, was shot outside Jaffa Gate and later died of his wounds.

When the War broke out in 1939, CMJ's operations in British Mandate Palestine were not overly affected until the Italian attack in 1940. Thereafter the CMJ personnel and institutions became more involved. At one point the British authorities requisitioned a complete ward at the CMJ Hospital. But throughout the war period most of the staff stayed at their posts.

The period after 1945, however, witnessed a new dynamic. Jewish immigrants were desperately trying to enter the land, the British authorities were trying to keep things calm by restricting Jewish immigration, and the Arab Higher Committee violently opposed the Jewish aspirations. CMJ was caught in the middle. In 1946 the British police commandeered CMJ's Immanuel House in Tel Aviv-Jaffa for a police billet and almost all the CMJ buildings in Jerusalem were caught in the crossfire. Then in January 1947 the British evacuated families in what became known as 'Operation Polly.'



*Rev. Hugh Jones, Rector of Christ Church Jerusalem
1945 - 1964*

The CMJ head in Jaffa, Roger Allison, wrote: 'We were all immensely relieved that our own Society... left the important decision about staying or departing to the discretion of its agents in the field... I believe that CMJ's commitment to the Jewish people played an overriding role in such a policy of trust.' Again, while some CMJ people did leave, the majority did not.

But it was a very difficult time for Hebrew Christians. They were suspected by the Arab fighters because they were Jewish, and by the Jewish authorities as being pro-British. It was then that CMJ (alongside other mission agencies) implemented 'Operation Mercy' in 1948 and evacuated many Hebrew Christians to Britain. This endeavour, which removed most of the Jewish believers from the land, was later heavily criticised.

The security situation deteriorated following the UN Partition vote on 29 November 1947 which resulted in the decision to establish a



Jewish state in part of Palestine. The decision was for the establishment of an Arab state as well. But the Arab League and Arab Higher Committee refused to accept the UN decision, wanting instead to destroy the impending Jewish state. Tensions and conflict mounted. One Hebrew Christian, Joseph Hirschfield was put up against a wall and shot, but somehow managed to escape his would be killers and made it to Christ Church where he was hidden. Another Jewish Christian, Ursula Nehab, was apprehended but thankfully released (later to become Ursula Jones.)

Rev. Hugh Jones, the rector of Christ Church, recorded that by December the Jaffa Gate and Christ Church areas of the Old City were becoming very insecure. Services in the church and the school were affected, and on 8 December the Jewish school girls were moved to the CMJ hospital premises (on the western side of the city) while the Arab and Armenian girls continued at Christ Church. As a result of heavy fighting in early 1948, CMJ loaned its large, modern Hospital to the Jewish Hadassah Hospital. Jones tried to remain at Christ Church as much as he could, even though local Arab, Syrian and Jordanian soldiers were in the Old City and he had already confronted Syrian soldiers forcing their way into Christ Church. As places of Jewish worship were being vandalized and destroyed, Jones purchased an olive wood cross to place on the communion table, so that Christ Church with its Hebrew inscriptions would not be mistaken for a synagogue.

When the State of Israel was formally established on 14 May the tensions increased. The next day Kibbutz Kfar Etzion was attacked and 126 men and women were killed. Many of the wounded were brought to the Hadassah/CMJ Hospital. Some CMJ staff remained at the Hospital compound and one of the Arab staff was killed by a Jordanian shell. By the time the first Arab-Israel war was over, four CMJ staff and congregation members had been killed in the hostilities. Although certain CMJ buildings were commandeered by various armies over the

years, all of the CMJ properties retained a semblance of CMJ presence, which would not have happened had the personnel completely vacated those premises.

Since 1948 there have been other major conflicts: the 1956 Suez Crisis, the 1967 Six Day War and the 1973 Yom Kippur War. CMJ's staff remained steadfast at their posts during these conflicts. The 1967 War had the most impact on CMJ as the Israeli victory permitted them to regain unrestricted entrance into the Old City and to Christ Church, its *raison d'être* property. At that time the British Embassy issued evacuation notices to British subjects, but the attitude of the majority of CMJ's staff is summed up in a statement sent by Roger Allison to CMJ HQ in London. 'We came here out of a deep sense of vocation to serve the Jewish people...if we were to leave, our

witness in the midst of Israel and in this beloved little land would be spoiled for ever...this I say, is the prevailing thought of all your staff.'

Since that time there have been other wars and terrorist attacks up to the present crisis in Gaza and Lebanon and the missile attacks from Yemen and Iran. Yet throughout all the years and conflicts, CMJ has remained steadfast. On only a few occasions did some of the staff opt to leave the

country. From the near death of John Nicolayson until recent times, a number of people, associated with CMJ, made the ultimate sacrifice. While viewing CMJ's long and unbroken presence in the land it becomes apparent that they have been faithful to the calling given them to proclaim, to both Israel and the Nations, the good news .that God so loved the world that He gave His Son. And as the world's attention continues to focus upon the people and the little piece of land called Israel, we continue to join Rev. John Nicholayson, CMJ's first resident in Jerusalem, who prayed prophetically while Christ Church was being built almost 200 years ago, "*May it grow into a great tree of life, providing shelter for Israel and its fruit a healing for the nations.*"



Scan or click here to read Hugh Jones' diary from the 1948 war.

KELVIN CROMBIE, HERITAGE RESOURCES

HE WILL SWALLOW UP DEATH
FOREVER; AND THE LORD GOD WILL
WIPE AWAY TEARS FROM ALL FACES.

*We remember those at CMJ, whether staff, volunteers or community members
who lost their lives in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.*

May their memory be a blessing, Amen.

Freeda Hishmeh (1937)

Abraham Davidson (1939)

Hilda Andersson (1948)

Mildred Marston (1948)

Joan M. Thompson (1948)

Yerevant Zakarian (1948)

Barbara P. Burke (1991)

Kristine Luken (2010)

Hannah Bladon (2017)



A PLACE THAT FEELS LIKE HOME

Justin & Sara Hogeboom

Directors of CMJ's Beit Bracha (House of Blessing) in Migdal on the Lake of Galilee

Within the days following October 7, the previous managers of Beit Bracha, who were already planning to return home at the end of November, departed. The premises were left mostly unattended for the following month, until we were able to relocate from Jerusalem and begin the work of cleaning and organizing the facilities to be able to reopen our doors. God provided others with a heart to serve to help us provide a place for Israelis in their time of need.

Our initial intention was to welcome displaced families from the northern border. However, by the time we arrived in the Galilee, many families had found alternative housing. And so we shifted our focus and attention to serving the soldiers and their families. To date, we have welcomed over 100 soldiers (believers and non-believers) in their units or along with their families, and have offered them one or two nights of rest and meals free of charge.

This, along with the cleaning of the rooms, hosting other local individuals and groups, maintaining the property, and balancing office responsibilities, leads to many long days for us and our three volunteers. However, each one believes that God called them here for this time and are happy to be able to show the love of Jesus through hospitality, conversations, and other means.

While Israel has had to endure many unique challenges, for ourselves and the volunteers who served with us, it was our first exposure to, and experience living in, a nation at war. As humans, we are all subject to changes in our emotional being, particularly in times of heightened tensions and conflict. There are times, whether we are aware of it or not, where we are impacted by the stress of being caught in between a constant state of alertness and continuing with the routines and responsibilities of everyday life. In addition to the emotional aspect, we have days where we are physically exhausted.

From the beginning of our time here, we sought to establish this place as one of prayer and worship. We often come together as a team to seek the Lord – whether through daily devotions, times of prayer and intercession, or praising and worshiping Him in song.

We understood the importance of these times prior to the outbreak of the war. However, when confronted with rocket alerts in Migdal and the surrounding communities or drone and missile attacks from Iran, it reminds us of our helplessness and our need to depend on and fix our hearts, minds, and eyes on God—both individually and collectively.

“
**WE ARE
 WITNESSES
 TO THE
 PROMISE
 THAT GOD
 WILL MAKE
 A ONE
 NEW MAN.**
 ”



Justin & Sara Hogeboom, Directors of CMJ's Beit Bracha (House of Blessing) in Migdal on the Lake of Galilee

Prior to October 7, Beit Bracha primarily hosted Christian individuals, families, groups and ministries from around the world. Since then, our focus has changed and we, in a way, have been brought back to CMJ's original purpose by serving and meeting the needs of the Jewish people. While our purpose has been to support the soldiers and their families, we have hosted other locals including individuals, families, congregations, and youth camps. We are also in initial discussions with the CMJ Mercy Fund in Jerusalem about using our facilities as a distribution center for food and other needs.

Throughout the past year, we have had the privilege of partnering with individuals (often to invite IDF soldiers serving in the Galilee, along with their families), congregations who have been displaced in order to come and meet together and worship, and organizations (such as a two-day emergency medical training seminar for our neighbours in the north). We are also a part of Migdal's local WhatsApp group to receive updates or learn of needs in the community and have had the opportunity to meet and connect with several of our neighbors.

Amid the challenges, we have witnessed or been a part of stories of healing and connection. Two memories come to mind.

The first story of healing was when we invited a Messianic soldier and his wife to join us for the Shabbat dinner. They decided to get married only weeks after October 7 in the IDF base he was stationed on and were unsure if they could join us as they had other friends in the area. And so we continued to invite others to join us for Shabbat, including our Arab cook at Beit Bracha. As God ordained, the soldier and his wife decided to join us at the last minute. They performed the Shabbat blessings together and, during the conversation, shared how God had brought everything together so quickly for their wedding even though it was in such an unusual place, time, and manner. They asked our cook where she was from during the conversation, which led to her sharing her own testimony with them.

Our cook shared how she was raised in a Communist family, but after a friend gave her a Bible to read, she came to faith. She knew that the Lord delivered the Jewish people from Egypt and gave them this land. As she spoke, tears came to the soldier's eyes, and she began speaking to him in Hebrew. Soon after, they embraced, and he began crying. In that special moment, we were witnesses to the promise that God would and will continue to create in Himself one new man and break down the wall of separation.



We saw this again on a separate occasion as we facilitated the meeting of a group of Jewish and Arab families who came together to pray, worship, and seek the Lord for His will and purpose in and for their lives.

In the second story we'd like to share, a story of connection, we hosted a religious soldier, his wife—who recently gave birth to their fifth child—and children. From the moment they arrived, he expressed his appreciation for this blessing we extended to his family, wanted to know about CMJ, and asked many questions relating to prayer and Christianity. Over the course of two days, we spoke with him for several hours and had the opportunity to pray with and for him. It was another special and meaningful moment of connection that made all the work and long days more than worth it.

Beit Bracha has served an important role as a place of refuge and rest for many soldiers—Messianic, religious and secular—over the past year. Many of the Messianic soldiers shared with us of how they had stayed here in the past and looked back on those times with fond memories. Several of them had stayed

here as youth with the pre-army program and are now responsible for discipling and mentoring the current generation of Messianic youth prior to entering their mandatory years of army service. Religious soldiers and their wives also expressed their appreciation for the opportunities we gave them just to be together as couples or families, with many asking us who we are and why we stayed in the country to do this for them and their people.

The wife of one soldier, both non-believers, contacted us and wanted to arrange a stay for her and her husband who was soon celebrating his birthday and would be released from service for a time. We prepared their room with a bottle of wine and a box of chocolates. The next morning following breakfast he came to us, hugged us and, through translation help from one of our local volunteers, expressed his immense gratitude for what we did for them. He told us that no one had ever done something like this for him before. We could share many testimonies of appreciation; however, for lack of space and time, we will share just a few we received from both believers and non-believers.

THANK YOU FOR BEING A
BLESSED SHIP IN THE STORM.

A blessing at the feet of the Sea of
Galilee where our Saviour walked.
Thank you for being good to the
people of Israel in the love of
Messiah.

We have all been blessed by
coming away to retreat in the
sanctuary of shalom you have
cultivated in faith and prayer. We
pray God's richest blessings upon
you and on this ministry.

The thing that touched me was the fact that you wanted to pray
for us, and it felt like you loved us, even the fact that you didn't
really know us. Thank you so much for having us here.

TESTIMONIES FROM BEIT BRACHA

THE THING THAT TOUCHED MY HEART IS SEEING
DIFFERENT PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT PLACES AROUND
THE WORLD COMING TO ISRAEL TO VOLUNTEER AND
BLESS THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL.

"I'M STILL AMAZED FROM YOUR
KIND HOSPITALITY. AFTER MORE
THAN 188 DAYS ON THE
BATTLEFIELD, YOUR LOVELY
PLACE FEELS LIKE HOME. YOUR
STORY IS TRULY INSPIRING AND
YOU SHOULD BE PROUD OF ALL
THE THINGS YOU'VE DONE FOR
OUR PEOPLE. WISHING YOU AND
YOUR FAMILIES ALL THE BEST.
WITH GREAT LOVE."

AFTER A LONG AND
CHALLENGING PERIOD
WHEN MY HUSBAND WAS
IN THE MILITARY
SERVICE, YOU HOSTED US
WITH GREAT LOVE, YOU
TOOK CARE OF
CLEANLINESS, DELICIOUS
FOOD AND A BIG SMILE.
OUR PRAYER IS THAT
GOD WILL REWARD YOU
FOR ALL THE GOOD YOU
HAVE DONE FOR US.
THANK YOU!"

Thank you so much for
having us here! (My husband)
had a long time in the army
since the war started on 7/10.
The time here was such a
relief and a blessing for both
of us! Also a time to rest as
a couple who didn't see each
other for a long time. We
loved to meet the staff here
and get to know them. Such
nice people! God bless you!



There are more stories: wives who expressed their fear of having their husbands serve in the army, their exhaustion of taking care of their children and home, their gratitude of being in a beautiful place where they can just be with their family, sleep through an entire night, not thinking about preparing meals or having to clean; a soldier who was so focused on serving his country that his marriage was falling apart—their time here as a family helped him realize this and brought much needed attention, time and healing; a unit of officers who wanted to know who we are and why we opened our doors to them (this presented an opportunity to share an overview of CMJ's 200-year history, the support, encouragement and prayers of believers from around the world, and God's call to us to be here with the people of Israel at this time); another unit who extended an invitation to us to join them in their Rosh Hashanah celebration; and two rabbis from our local community who came to recite the blessings for Yom Teruah and blow the shofars.

Looking back, although it has been a difficult year in many ways—not only physically, mentally, and spiritually, but also financially the facility is a very difficult challenge in this time of war—we clearly see how the Lord has been moving and at work in this place and ministry. God is working through a team from different nationalities, cultures, and backgrounds—through our faults and weaknesses—to reach out to a nation that needs His peace and His blessings. May God continue to bring those in need a place to rest, be refreshed, and find the true restoration that comes from His presence. To Him be all the glory.



**HEAR FROM STAFF MEMBERS
AT BEIT BRACHA. CLICK OR
SCAN AND WATCH:**





TOUR WITH PURPOSE

MYRON & CAROL GOODWIN, GRACE CHAPEL, NASHVILLE

It has been a whirlwind year of missions, and we've been fortunate enough to travel from Idaho to the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and back to Jerusalem with CMJ.

We have been to Israel a few times, and each trip changes us in ways we never expect. People often talk about falling in love with the land of Israel—and that's true, you do. But when you come on one of these service trips, you fall in love with the people. That's the real heart of it. And that's why we keep going back.

This year alone, we've done four service tours. The first one was before the war in August 2023, and the rest followed in March, April, and most recently in September. Each trip has been different, but the purpose remains the same: meeting needs, connecting with people, and being a tangible presence of support for those going through tough times.

One of our most impactful trips was in March, right after the war had started. The people were in shock, and the need for trauma counseling was urgent.

We partnered with two incredible women trained in trauma care to lead a workshop at Christ Church for the CMJ staff. The aim was simple: to offer tools and support to help those living in the constant stress of war.

What stood out most wasn't just the content of the training, but the gratitude from the staff. We were able to give them something they desperately needed—recognition of their struggles and a few practical tools to help them manage. It was such a privilege to be there and serve in that way.

Then came our trip in April, which took us from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and down to Ein HaBesor. In every place, the message on our hearts was the same: *"The world may be turning its back on Israel, but God never will."* This was especially meaningful during our time with Israeli soldiers.

We met two soldiers by chance at a gas station, and we struck up a conversation. They were secular Israelis, and at first, it was hard to connect. But when I began sharing from the book of Jeremiah

“
**WE KEEP
COMING
BACK
BECAUSE
OF THE
PEOPLE**

”

about how God would never abandon His people, you could see something shift in their eyes.

That moment—looking them in the eyes and letting them know that there are Christians around the world who stand with them—was powerful. It's a message they needed to hear, and I believe God used us to deliver it.

But it's not just about delivering a message—it's about building relationships. One of the most touching experiences we had was cleaning homes for families who had lost loved ones to cancer and terrorism. There was so much grief in those homes, but also joy. They were so thankful we came, not to fix anything, but just to be with them, to serve them. It's in those quiet moments—scrubbing floors or sharing a cup of coffee—that real connections are made.

And it's not just the Jewish families we've connected with. We've formed lasting relationships with the Christian community in Jerusalem as well.

People like Henry, who runs the Rex Shop, or Samira, who owns the liquor store across from Roots, have become part of our extended family. Every time we go back, we stop in, have a Turkish coffee, and catch up on life. These moments remind us that our work isn't just about service—it's about being there for people, over and over again, so they know they aren't forgotten.

When people go on tours to Israel, they fall in love with the land. But when they go on service tours, they fall in love with the people. It's true. And that's why we keep coming back.

It's why people like Mary Ruth, who joined us for the first time in April, came back in September. She was so moved by the connections she made during that first trip that she canceled a pilgrimage tour and convinced her husband to join us in December on the next service tour instead.

We're planning two more trips next year, and we're excited to see what God will do. We've already started reaching out to Scott and Laura to plan how we can make the most impact. The work we've done so far has only scratched the surface, and there's so much more we can do.

Every trip, every connection, reminds us of why we do this. It's about more than just showing up—it's about standing with people, letting them know they're not alone, and sharing in their joys and struggles. Whether we're cleaning homes, sharing a cup of coffee, or offering a word of encouragement, we're there to serve.

As we look back on this year, we're filled with gratitude for the ways God has moved through CMJ and these service tours. We can't wait to see what He has in store next. Thank you for standing with us, for praying with us, and for being part of this incredible journey.

IN A DEEPLY PERSONAL MOMENT

As the director of Shores, having tourists cancel their trips has become common over the years. The two and a half years of COVID-19 brought constant tour disruptions. Roughly six months after the last COVID measures, October 7th struck the recovering industry. We had tours in the country, and my first task was to ensure their safety and evacuation. One guide had to leave his group at the Dead Sea to report to his reserve unit. After the initial emergency response, we entered a long period of waiting. Inspired by a neighboring ministry, I realized we could help churches and individuals come to serve. Over the last year, we hosted six mission-focused tours. These groups were determined to show solidarity with Israel, and their presence was a blessing.

One of the key projects we engaged in was helping farmers in the Gaza Envelope harvest their crops. But beyond the physical labor, we built ministry connections that I know will last. One powerful moment that I'll never forget involved a 14-year-old Jewish shepherd boy who was tragically murdered. His family was in deep mourning, and their friends needed help to clean the house as they prepared for shiva (the Jewish period of mourning).

In an extraordinary turn of events, they reached out to us, CMJ, a Christian organization. They had heard about our work and how we had been serving during this difficult time. The fact that they trusted us to come and help in such a deeply personal moment spoke volumes. We went, cleaned their home, and stood in solidarity with them, showing love and compassion when they needed it most. This story continues to stick with me as a testament to the power of relationship-building and service, even in the midst of conflict.

**SCOTT MORGAN,
DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF CMJ &
SHORES TOURS DIRECTOR**



BYSTANDERS YET AGAIN?

REV. DAVID PILEGGI

In the midst of the current crisis engulfing Israel, we find ourselves inundated with a relentless stream of information—images, opinions, and social media updates—and it's essential to recognize that what we are witnessing is not just a regional conflict, but a deadly spiritual war being waged globally.

The current Gaza/Lebanon conflict has brought to the fore the age-old sin of anti-Semitism. Right now, we are seeing deeply disturbing expressions of this hatred as the Jewish people endure the most significant suffering since the Holocaust. (In the U.S. alone, a country that has no significant history of anti-semitism, there has been a 200% increase of antisemitic incidents since Oct 7, 2023.) How can it be that in the face of such horrific atrocities, this vile form of hatred is on the rise?

Perhaps the answer lies in the nature of anti-Semitism itself. It is not merely an ancient human prejudice or a hostility rooted in a specific event. It is something born in a complex interchange between the demonic and human rebellion against God. This is why anti-Semitism has persisted across time, geography, and culture, and defies any logical explanation.

While most people would not claim to condone anti-Semitism, we can easily become confused and immolated (even

cynical) with so much "information" wielded by a powerful and pervasive bias that holds Israel to a double-standard and the Jewish people responsible for any number of grievances.

It is very easy to recognize anti-Semitism in the past. We often look back at the 1930s and moralize about those who failed to speak out against the rising tide of hatred. But it is not so easy to see it in our own present culture. Autocracies, such as Iran, Russia, N.Korea, Venezuela (and others) in their attempts to destabilize the West are working overtime to flood social media, on both the left and the right, with fake news, disinformation and conspiracy theories about Israel and the Jewish people. Taken together with the anti-Israel bias often found in Western media outlets it becomes difficult to know what is true and who to believe.

It is not enough to disapprove in private or among like-minded friends. We are tempted to remain silent to avoid uncomfortable situations with our families, churches, schools, workplaces, and especially on social media.

We are in a crisis. The question is: do we recognize the nature of this spiritual conflict, and more importantly, will we stand on the truth of God's Word, pray for direction and act as the Lord would guide? Will we speak out, be courageous and encourage others to resist the spirit of our age and popular opinion? Or will we also become bystanders, confused and fearful of being unpopular or cancelled in this latest wave of Jew-hatred. This moment calls upon us to stand in solidarity with our Jewish neighbors, offering practical support and cooperation so they are assured that this time we are with them in their distress.

October 7th hit our school community at AISJ hard, instantly turning things upside down. We had just finished the holiday of Sukkot, and many of our students and staff were still abroad. We quickly assessed the situation and determined how best to move forward. Fortunately, the lessons learned during the Covid pandemic proved invaluable. We were able to pivot almost seamlessly to online learning, adopting a hybrid model that combined in-person learning with virtual sessions. This allowed us to keep the school running even as the world outside unraveled. Over the next three months, students and their families were gradually evacuated under the guidance of their respective organizations or embassies. However, by the end of January 2024, most had returned, ready to continue their studies in person.

Communication was our lifeline, keeping students and parents informed and connected, even when thousands of miles separated us. But we also wanted to provide something extra for those who remained in person. The senior leadership team made it a point to ramp up staff appreciation efforts, recognizing just how much everyone was giving in such difficult circumstances. Rather than encouraging through words alone, an immediate way we could assist them was addressing the needs of local staff members whose children couldn't attend schools lacking adequate bomb shelters. And so we set up on-site childcare, allowing our teachers to focus on their work without worrying about their children's safety. The AISJ student council also stepped in, organizing fun events to boost students' spirits.

For our youngest learners, we introduced daily PE sessions to help manage their energy and emotions. Despite many leaving after October, we still ensured that Christmas was celebrated with a carol service and a creatively filmed Primary Nativity Play, which we shared with families overseas. While our academic structure adapted quickly, the emotional impact of October 7th was far more challenging to address. Students and staff alike felt the weight of the events. Thankfully, we had recently welcomed a new secondary school counselor who specialized in trauma care. She worked tirelessly, providing support both in person and online. Homeroom teachers and teaching assistants, too, played a crucial role, checking in with their students daily to ensure no one slipped through the cracks.

Running a school during a time of war and prolonged tension came with unique challenges. Our community, with its diverse backgrounds, had to navigate the emotional toll in different ways. Many of our students came from parts of the world where conflict wasn't part of their daily reality, which made it difficult to predict how they would react. We had to remain flexible, adjusting learning expectations to account for their emotional well-being. At the same time, we recognized the strain on our staff, particularly those with loved ones serving in the military. They too needed time and space to process their emotions. This period was undoubtedly challenging, but it also revealed the resilience of our community as we supported each other in new ways, giving time for "well-being" days for staff that required it.



**SUSTAINED
BY PRAYER**

DEVIN MITCHELL &
SARAH COLEMAN

Simultaneously, our teachers, grappling with their own emotions, sometimes found themselves at odds with one another. But ever more, faith became our anchor during this challenging time.

We learned to lean into prayer more than ever before. Our Christian staff gathered together every morning to pray and we began all other meetings with prayer as well. This practice sustained us, as we felt God's hand guiding us through each difficulty. The atmosphere on campus remained one of peace, and many who had never engaged in prayer before began to open up to it. Our secondary student Bible study quadrupled in size, and students started asking deeper, more spiritual questions. It became clear that God was moving within our community, softening hearts, and preparing us for future spiritual growth.

Even amid the uncertainty and difficulty, moments of hope and resilience emerged. One teacher's son, serving in Gaza, survived a potentially deadly RPG attack, along with his entire unit. We took this as a direct answer to the prayers we had been offering daily, and these testimonies of protection and provision strengthened our faith. They reminded us that, even in the darkest of times, God is present—offering comfort and hope.

Throughout the year, despite the external pressures, we held fast to our mission and values. We constantly reminded ourselves and our community that every person is created in the image of God and deserves to be treated with dignity, love, and grace. By focusing on these values, we created a refuge of safety and hope within the school's gates. For many families, particularly those in the expat community, the school became a place of solace amidst uncertainty. We received overwhelming support and gratitude from parents who understood the challenges we faced. Despite the immense pressures, we never lost sight of our core mission: to serve.



Devin Mitchell & Sarah Coleman, Heads of AISJ alongside chairman of the school board, Daryl Fenton



AISJ is the Anglican International School of Jerusalem and one of CMJ Israel's various ministries. We are an Anglican school but have teachers and students from all around the world. AISJ is very popular with the various embassies and consulates in Jerusalem and so we have students from many countries in almost every continent as well as children of expats and local Israeli students. We believe that every child is made in the image of God and is precious, so we serve children from whatever cultural, national, or religious background they come from. We are dedicated to preparing students to succeed throughout the world, in schools, universities, future responsibilities and careers, just as we are founded upon Christian beliefs and values.

**WATCH HOW AISJ
CONTINUED TO SERVE
ITS STUDENT BODY IN
THIS PAST YEAR:**





TAKING REFUGE IN JERUSALEM

A SANCTUARY IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CHAOS

It has been a year filled with horror, tragedy, and many challenges. When the war began, all the guests in our guesthouse in Jerusalem had to leave. However, over the next few months, the guest house on the compound became a crucial refuge for people fleeing violence in November and December. One of the most significant memories was the arrival of refugees from Ashkelon—over 60 people, mostly elderly and Russian-speaking.

Many of the refugees had endured traumatic experiences—homes damaged by rockets, sleepless nights of constant sirens, and the unrelenting sounds of explosions. Ashkelon, being close to Gaza, was a particularly dangerous area. When they arrived at Christ Church, many were deeply shaken.

One of the biggest challenges was communication, as many didn't speak Hebrew or English. Since I speak Russian, I was able to assist in their native language, which helped ease their anxieties.

Nina, (a Russian speaking guide in our Heritage Centre) and I prepared questions on a Google Form to gather their details. Beyond logistics, we wanted to provide them with a sense of comfort and normalcy. Together we organized activities for the children like cooking, movie nights, drawing, and games to distract them from the turmoil. We also arranged for a Russian-speaking psychologist through the Mercy Fund, who provided much-needed counseling.

What moved me most was how the refugees responded to the kindness and warmth they found at Christ Church. Many told me that the guest house felt like a sanctuary in the middle of the chaos. They were surprised by how peaceful and welcoming the environment was, and their gratitude was palpable. I'll never forget hearing them say that being here was like finding a piece of heaven during a dark and terrifying time.

By December, a second group arrived, this time with more children. We continued with similar activities and provided support, as some elderly individuals from the first group returned home. Hosting these families kept us grounded during the chaos of the war. While we weren't on the front lines, we knew that what we were doing was important. It was our way of contributing meaningfully during a time when many felt helpless.

**CHRISTINA, CHRIST
CHURCH STAFF**

MOMENTS OF DEEPER CONNECTION

I had only recently moved to Israel from Ukraine after months as a refugee in Poland. And so when the refugees came to Christ Church the experience was a moment of connection. Most of the refugees spoke Russian

or Ukrainian, and many had only recently made Aliyah due to the war in Ukraine. For them, Jerusalem was a completely new environment, and the weight of their past experiences was evident.

During their stay, I had the privilege of taking them on tours around Jerusalem. We visited places like the Tower of David, the Western Wall Tunnels, and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. These were not just sightseeing trips—they became moments of significant connection. I remember one woman in particular, a mother of two from Ukraine, who received devastating news while she was with us: she had a tumor.

The emotional weight she carried was immense, but we gathered and prayed for her at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Eyal, one of my fellow guides joined me in those prayers, and I truly believe God heard us. After her surgery, she called to tell me that her health was improving, and she wanted to return to Jerusalem with her sister. We spent another day together, visiting the Holy Sepulcher and the Western Wall. These tours were more than just an opportunity to show them the beauty of the

city—they were about offering a sense of hope and connection. For many of the refugees, these moments became a turning point, helping them feel supported in both body and spirit. I still talk to many of those who stayed with us, some even coming up to Jerusalem simply to visit for a time in order to chat.

**NINA, CHRIST CHURCH
HERITAGE CENTER STAFF**

A CHANCE TO BREATHE

I am one of the residents of Ashkelon who was brought here to this paradise. I was alone in my apartment when the war began, and I could hear the rockets falling around me, each explosion shaking me to my core. My apartment was damaged by one of these rockets, the fragments hitting my bedroom, and the shock of it all left me feeling deeply depressed.

The stories of Hamas's atrocities, the violence that engulfed our communities—it was too much to bear. When I heard that they were evacuating people to Jerusalem, I called instantly. Soon I found myself on a bus full of people, each of us like



M., a refugee from Ashkelon, whose apartment was damaged by a Hamas rocket in the fighting

wounded animals, carrying our own trauma and fear. When we arrived at Christ Church, we were greeted with smiles and love. It felt like a light had been switched on. The people here seemed to truly understand our suffering, and they surrounded us with warmth and care. We were able to rest—our hearts, our minds, and our souls. It was deeply moving.

I am so grateful to the people who took us in and organized everything. This place, this time here, gave us a chance to breathe, to escape the horrors of the war. We are all hoping for a swift victory and the end of this evil.

- M., ASHKELON



[Click here](#) or scan the code to watch M's full story about her time at the Christ Church Guesthouse:



THE HIGHWAY

An Interview With Michael Kerem

ON FIRE

CMJ: *Thanks for taking the time to speak with me. A lot of what's been happening this year is destruction, chaos, and death—there's just so much bad news. CMJ has spent years talking about reconciliation, and I'm wondering how this current situation fits into that vision. What does this vision look like when the Isaiah 19 highway is being traveled by F-35s instead of disciples? How can we pray into this moment?*

Michael Kerem: That's a good question. First of all, most of the redemptive promises we see in the Bible actually come out of judgment. They don't usually come from peaceful times. In the natural, it feels like we're further away from seeing the fulfillment of Isaiah 19 or Jeremiah 49, or any of those prophecies, but it's actually during difficult times that a breakthrough happens.

If you look back at history, after the Yom Kippur War in 1973, for example, that's when we saw a wave of Israeli believers coming to faith! There was an outpouring of the Holy Spirit during that time. So, while we think it's the kindness of God that leads people to repentance—and it is—that kindness often comes through judgment. It's a challenging concept, but history supports it.

CMJ: *That's interesting. Is this conflict affecting the Church in the Muslim world in a similar way?*

Kerem: Absolutely. Every time we see a rise in Islamic extremism or jihadism, we also see a corresponding exodus from Islam. People become disillusioned with their faith, and it opens the door for them to start seeking something more. It's often the first step in their journey towards faith in God. I've noticed this pattern for the last 30 years—whenever there's a wave of radical jihadism, it damages the faith of many Muslims, and they become more open to exploring other options. They start searching for a God who is different from the one they thought they knew.

CMJ: *That makes sense. So, in terms of reconciliation, how are believers communicating during these times? Is there more connection happening, even across enemy lines?*

Kerem: Yes, and that's been one of the most remarkable things. This is the age of the internet, and it allows for communication even in the middle of conflict. I've seen believers from the Arab world sending messages saying, "Don't stop until the job is finished." They don't want the terrorist elements in their countries either.

I've also received a lot of messages from believers in Lebanon. It's incredible. Despite the trauma their kids are experiencing, they're seeing massive openness among both Sunnis and Shiites. This has been an opportunity for the Christian community in Lebanon to reach out to the Shiite population, especially as they flee into Christian areas. But it's complicated—there's a lot of suspicion because of past conflicts, but there's also desperation.

CMJ: *So, even in the middle of destruction, there's still room for connection and outreach.*

Kerem: Exactly. One of our partners in Lebanon, for example, is working daily to distribute food to these displaced people, many of whom have lost everything. At the same time—and the reality is harsh—Israel has to defend itself, and sometimes that means firing into areas where terrorist groups are hiding among civilians. It's hard for Westerners to understand how someone can shoot rockets from their garage and then hide the launcher, but that's the reality on the ground.

CMJ: *It sounds like a really difficult balancing act, especially for believers caught in the middle.*

Kerem: It is. I had someone once say to me, “The Isaiah 19 highway is on fire right now.” And while that’s true in a sense, it’s also the context in which God’s promises are fulfilled. You could say, the highway is often forged by fire. We can’t afford to be discouraged by what we see on the news. This is the time to pray more, to step out more, to love more—even our enemies. That’s what we’re called to do as believers.

CMJ: *That’s a powerful message, but it’s not easy. As a Jewish believer, how does that play into your experience in this region? Especially now, when it feels like everything is focused on protecting Israel?*

Kerem: It’s not easy. The Messianic community, understandably, has become very focused on Israel and the immediate threats we face. But as believers, we have to maintain a regional perspective. We can’t just focus on our nation—we have to care about the entire region because God’s promises involve more than just Israel. They encompass all the surrounding nations. When we pray for our enemies, it changes our perspective. We stop seeing them just as enemies and start seeing them as people—people who are loved by God, just like we are. That shift is crucial, especially in times like these.

When you pray for your enemies, a few things happen. First, you start to see them from God’s perspective, as people He loves.



“On that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria ... Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, whom the Lord of hosts has blessed, saying, “Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance.” -

Isaiah 19:23-25

Second, you just might find yourself becoming part of the answer to your own prayers. Sometimes, praying for your enemies leads you to cross boundaries—cultural, relational, or even geographical—to reach out in love.

But it’s not easy. It often exposes attitudes in your own community. When a Jewish believer (serving as chaplain at the English Hospital in Nazareth) said that we should pray for everyone in Gaza, it stirred up lots of emotion. People don’t naturally want to pray for their enemies. But that’s what makes the gospel so powerful—it calls us to do what is not natural. To love in this way is supernatural.



Michael Kerem is a CMJ ministry partner who runs *Derech Avraham // At The Crossroads*, a relational network of Middle Eastern nationals and internationals working in various spheres of ministry with a Kingdom vision of the Middle East that is best outlined in Isaiah’s vision of a highway in Isaiah 19.

The idea for the ministry began in 2012 when the rector of Christ Church, David Pileggi, observed that the world’s myopic vision of the Middle East was affecting the church. Instead of becoming obsessed with the problems of the Arab-Israel conflict, the church needed to have a bigger perspective of all that God was doing in the Middle East.

There was no better place to host such a ministry than CMJ, which historically had mission stations across the Middle East. With the help of a friend in Beirut, Michal and David have been running the network for over ten years, hosting practical initiatives, while holding prayer and fellowship gatherings every other year at Christ Church Jerusalem.



JOIN US IN BRINGING HOPE TO ISRAEL IN A TIME OF CRISIS

This past year, the peoples of Israel, Gaza and the West Bank have faced unimaginable challenges—families torn apart by violence, communities in desperate need of support, and countless individuals searching for refuge. CMJ Israel has been working to provide shelter, emotional care, and spiritual guidance to those who need it most.

BUT WE CAN'T DO THIS ALONE.

Your support is crucial as we continue to serve in the aftermath of conflict. With more than 19,000 rockets launched at Israel, thousands have been displaced, families shattered, and communities struggle to rebuild. Every day, we open our doors to soldiers, refugees, and families who need safety, rest, and the peace of God's presence. Your donation today will directly support life-saving initiatives, including:

- Providing safe shelter for displaced families and soldiers.
- Supplying food, medical care, and emotional support to those traumatized by the ongoing conflict.
- Expanding educational programs for children affected by war, giving them hope for a brighter future.

We believe that even in the darkest times, God's love shines through acts of kindness, service, and compassion. With your help, we can continue to be that light in the midst of this crisis.

Please consider making a gift today. Together, we can bring hope, healing, and restoration to the people of Israel.

DONATE ❤️



GOD IS WITH US

This past year has been one of the most difficult periods in Israel's recent history. After the war broke out on October 7, more than 19,000 rockets have been launched at Israel, many of them towards Tel Aviv/Jaffa. When the sirens start to wail people scramble for cover. At Beit Immanuel we have a large basement and we quickly became the shelter for our neighborhood. But it isn't just a shelter, *Beit Immanuel* lives up to its name, a *House [where] God is With Us*.

One day two religious families with small children and a tiny dog were passing by Beit Immanuel when the sirens went off. I called them to come quickly to our shelter. And once again people were amazed by the peace they experience here. Klara, one of our volunteers, shared her story with one of the women and told her why she is here even at such a dangerous time. I had the opportunity to talk about our faith to one of the men. We had a good time together. He listened attentively and even stayed longer than most people do after an incoming rocket alarm. As he was leaving, he

grabbed my hand, shook it tightly and thanked us for all that we're doing. Staying here and facing difficult situations with people speaks louder than any words we could say about our faith in the Messiah. The amazing thing about this place is that we have not only become a shelter for the community, but a place where the love of God is shared through simple acts of kindness.

AMEN!

As the country was caught by surprise on October 7 the IDF didn't have everything needed for the thousands of quickly mobilized soldiers sent to defend our borders. The kehilah (our Hebrew congregation) at Beit Immanuel also mobilized quickly to support the soldiers. We started buying large quantities of basic supplies and foodstuffs, and brought it south where we distributed it to the soldiers getting ready for battle. We always made sure to tell them why we were doing it and God opened many doors.

One day we received a phone call from an IDF officer. He asked if we would like to help with the purchase of boots for

a whole platoon stationed on the border with Lebanon.

We bought 64 pairs of the best tactical boots we could find and brought them up to the soldiers. Inside each pair of boots we put a beautiful card that had a verse from the New Testament on it. We told them to read it and place it in their pocket next to their heart. They were touched to see how much we cared. We also asked if we could pray for them ... and we told them that we pray in the Name of Yeshua. They happily agreed. At the end of our prayer they all shouted the loudest Amen that I've ever heard in my life!

Watch how Beit Immanuel has been serving its local community since the onset of the war:



SINGING THE PSALMS

Besides practical support and emergency relief efforts, Beit Immanuel is also a place where people can find rest and encouragement. One of our initiatives was a series of concerts, Singing the Psalms, organized by our staff and volunteers. These 8 garden concerts featured different musical groups, some quite well known, and gave us a chance to meet over 700 people from across Tel Aviv and beyond. One man in the audience was from a known anti-Christian group and he was very suspicious. But he stayed to listen and came back for several concerts. He talked with several of us and we had some deep conversations. Towards the end, he shook hands with me and said, "I realize now that we believe in the same God."

Although all the concerts were excellent and enjoyable, some were special. Half of the music groups were believers and at the end of one concert the musicians were worshipping as they sang The Blessing (in Hebrew, Arabic and English). Many in the audience were moved to tears. While providing all kinds of support during this difficult time in Israel, at this House (where) God is With Us, people do get a chance to meet the Lord.

PEDRO SANTOS, BEIT IMMANUEL

TO SHARE IN THE SUFFERING

Recently we started a pilot program at Beit Immanuel with the OneKing ministry in the U.S. The aim of this ministry is to serve the church through an understanding of God's purposes and to partner with His plan for Israel and the nations. A team totaling 8 young people are staying at Beit Immanuel for 3 months to learn about and to serve the people of Israel. They follow a team of 18 that stayed over the summer. The teams join our staff and volunteers for morning worship and devotions, work shifts with us and they also serve at other ministries. They help at a local soup kitchen and at The Red Carpet, a ministry for women on the streets. They also started a program for refugee children from Eritrea, Sudan, and Ethiopia. They meet the kids after school at a local community center and are helping them develop their English skills through lessons and other activities. But it's not just to learn English. It's to offer these children who have suffered a lot, a sense of stability and a hope for the future. "We want them to have a place where they can just be kids ..." one intern explained, "... a place to feel safe and cared for, where they know they are valued." The sessions often end with singing Bible songs together.

But it hasn't been an easy time to come to Israel. After a recent missile attack from Iran, one young woman, a recent law school graduate from the UK, told us, "Now I better understand what it's like to live with this kind of fear and uncertainty." When we asked if she wanted to return home, she replied, "No. The gospel is about embracing the suffering of others, and that's what I want to do here—to share in Israel's suffering and offer support, just as Jesus would."

SAMUEL WHITEFIELD, BEIT IMMANUEL



Scan and enjoy a beautiful rendition of "The Blessing" from our concert series at Beit Immanuel



THE MERCY FUND

Some of the greatest British social reformers of the 19th century were active members of CMJ. Activists such as Lord Shaftesbury, Hannah More and William Wilberforce have left a great legacy of both faith and works. From its very beginning in the 1820's, CMJ has been committed to bring relief to those in need in Jerusalem and the surrounding areas. CMJ built hospitals, clinics, pharmacies, workshops, schools and vocational training centers. They fed the poor, aided orphans, and improved the status of the local communities - Jews, Christians, Muslims, and refugees. Today, CMJ continues to carry out the heritage of its founders through Christ Church's Mercy Fund.

SNAPSHOTS OF A CONFLICT

VICTIMS OF TERROR

From the moment we awoke to the devastation of October 7th, every new statistic that we heard had an injured person in the hospital, a devastated family—people who were physically, psychologically, and even spiritually harmed. Our Mercy Fund worked on both the personal and bureaucratic level to assist these men and women. And, while personal visits to hospitals and loving care is incredibly important, it is also important to help them long-term financially while they are recovering as many of them will never be able to return to the life they once had.

A Jewish woman from the south lost her husband, a police officer, in battle against the terrorists. She and her children are suffering from the trauma of this experience and she has to make many decisions about the future while trying to process it all. Our Peles lawyers are helping her with all the legal paperwork she needs to submit in order to receive government benefits. We are also helping with counseling and other support.

SURROUNDED BY LOVE AND CARE

In September 2023, a mother from Gaza arrived in Israel with her infant daughter, seeking urgent medical care. Her baby girl, who was only a few months old, suffers from Down syndrome and heart complications. Through the help of an organization that provides treatment for children with serious health conditions, they came to Israel, where doctors performed two life-saving surgeries on her daughter. The surgeries were a success, and her daughter's health has since improved.

Just as they were preparing to return to Gaza, war broke out. Unable to go home, they found themselves stranded in Bethlehem, where

they have been living for the past few months.

Despite the immense challenges, the Mercy Fund has stepped in to provide ongoing support, offering clothes, food, special milk, diapers, and additional treatments for her daughter. The mother is profoundly grateful for the help, continuously thanking God for the kindness she's received during this difficult time.

The mother's husband and extended family remain in Gaza, where the situation has become increasingly dire. Although none of her family members have been harmed, they are struggling to survive. Whenever she is blessed with money from organizations or kind individuals, she sends it to her family in Gaza, enabling them to buy food and survive the ongoing conflict. She often reflects that, had she not come to Israel with her daughter, her family back in Gaza would have faced even greater hardship. It is through these small blessings that they are managing to get by.

Tomorrow, the mother will begin a new chapter by enrolling in a hairstyling course organized by the Mercy Fund in partnership with a German organization. This opportunity will allow her to learn new skills while she waits for the chance to return to Gaza.

What touches her most is the support she has found in Bethlehem. She had never met any Christians while living in Gaza, but now, in a time of great need, it was the church in Bethlehem, together with the Mercy Fund and other organizations, that has surrounded her with love, care, and practical help. They've given her the strength to carry on and provide for her daughter, and she is deeply thankful for the way this community has come together to help her during this season of uncertainty.



Food baskets prepared by The Mercy Staff for distribution to families in need during the ongoing crisis.

MERCY BEYOND BORDERS

Israel and the Palestinian Territories have an extremely complicated relationship. By law, Israelis are not allowed to go to certain places in the Palestinian Territories and Palestinians from the West Bank require a visa to work in Israel. After the war started, many Palestinians did not have their work visas renewed as Israel was worried about terror attacks from within as well as from without. The Israeli government just did not have the time or the resources to go through every applicant and issue a visa for those who just wanted to provide for their families. The Mercy Fund has been trying to assist where we are able with those most in need after their visas were denied.

We are continuing our support for many Palestinian families in Bethlehem and other cities in the West Bank. One family we serve is struggling because, under the wartime situation, the father can't go to his job in Israel while the mother is battling with cancer. This family also has two children with special needs and the house they live in is in very poor condition. We are

assisting them with various things, including food assistance and providing money to help renovate their home to serve the needs of the children better.

Another Palestinian family we are trying to help consists of a wife who is the sole breadwinner as the husband is very sick. She also is prevented from going to her job, cleaning houses in Jerusalem, so she is not receiving income and is very worried about the future. We are helping her with food assistance, household supplies, as well as with school supplies for her children.

SERVING CHILDREN

Many families in an array of communities are financially hard pressed in this season. In an effort to lighten the load, the Mercy Fund partnered with another organization to distribute backpacks and school supplies to children of all ages in low income families. Among those who received the backpacks were Eritrean refugees in Tel Aviv, Arab Christian families in Bethlehem, members of the Domari community in Jerusalem, and children in Messianic congregations in Ashkelon. With so many other financial burdens due to inflation and the continuing war, parents were especially grateful for the assistance in equipping their kids with backpacks and other back to school supplies.

Our partnership with G*, a dedicated Jewish educator, grows, as she works diligently alongside different schools to implement a new educational program that is designed to enhance literacy skills and communication methods for children. The program is widely used in Finland and has proved very beneficial for

children affected by trauma, as the communication-focus provides them with tools to better express themselves in the aftermath of the events of October 7th.

Thanks to the generosity of our donors, G* was able to provide kits for 30 additional classrooms in the South of Israel. In sync with this initiative, The Mercy Fund was also able to facilitate the donation of 160 tablets to children participating in her programs, providing tools that not only enrich their learning experience but do so in an interactive way. The tablets are being distributed across three schools: two of which are in the South. The third school is in the North of the country, where evacuated children are continuing their education despite being away from home for many months due to the conflict on the Northern border.

Teachers and students alike expressed gratitude, noting how these tablets have not only enhanced learning but also offered a glimmer of hope during uncertain times. At The Mercy Fund we are intent on introducing this program in the West Bank, where educational challenges are prevalent and schools are

under equipped. We aim to start with a pilot program at one school, demonstrating the program's value in order to inspire other schools to follow suit, starting with training to equip those who will teach the program. The journey is long, but the potential ripple effects of this initiative could transform many educational outcomes for many children and even help lift up the region as a whole.

The low-income schools in the South continue to suffer from the repercussions of the war. The children are hard hit, as their parents struggle and can't make ends meet. The schools are providing these children with the necessities: clothing, hygiene products, hot meals, and school supplies. But the teachers still see that this is barely scratching the surface of the trauma and grief. In one school, four of their young students have a parent who has committed suicide since the war began. These children keep coming to school because they have nothing else, and nowhere else to go.

It was these schools which received a gift of musical instruments through the Mercy Fund, thanks to the generosity of our partners.

One of the teachers called the Mercy Fund director at the end of the first day they introduced the musical instruments. She told of one of the children, whose parent committed suicide: "Each morning he arrives, crying and clinging to his teacher. Today, when we put an instrument in his hands, he changed. This is what he has, this is his."

From the first hour, the teachers saw the shift in their students. They laughed. They made music. They had fun. Their music was something for living, for the future, that the war could not take from them. One teacher wrote, at the end of the day: "I have to share with you my excitement arising from the joy of the children in the colorfulness of the yard with the wonderful and empowering musical equipment!"

This is what your partnership has made possible. Children traumatized by war, trying to exist in its shadow, now have the means to not just survive, but they have hope to thrive. That is the prayer of the Mercy Fund: that through the music, they will begin to live again.

**NA'AMAH SMITH, THE MERCY
FUND COORDINATOR**





*CMJ has been in the land of Israel for over
200 years, with a vision to build communities
of disciples who work, worship, and bear
witness in the land of Israel.*

**TO LEARN MORE ABOUT
CMJ ISRAEL PLEASE VISIT:
WWW.CMJ-ISRAEL.ORG**

October 7th: A Year In Review // CMJ Israel

Compiled, edited, and designed by Benjamin David & John Arnold