



Summer 2024

A Dispatch from Jerusalem

By The Rev. Matthew Dayton-Welch, Chair, American Friends of the Spafford Children's Center

Last month I made a six-day visit to Jerusalem where I met with dozens of the city's residents to hear how this war has most affected them. I've had a relationship with Jerusalem for 16 years now, and I care deeply for the people there. The stories broke my heart. My friends there described society as utterly fractured—workplaces, faith communities, friendships and even families—over the war, its effects, its meaning and what should happen next. These divisions create mistrust, and mistrust creates suspicion. In all my years there, I've never found the city so on edge.

But the Spafford Children's Center? Its light burns even more brightly now amidst the darkness of these present days. I spent two days at the Center, and there I found a place of great hope, where children were safe—and all the more important—felt safe. There they could laugh and tell stories, play in the courtyard and create with art supplies. There was healing underway, and the parents also felt this. I've never been more proud of how the Center is meeting the challenges before it.

Our child trauma therapy program, however, is overwhelmed. The volume of pain our therapist is navigating is daunting, and he needs help. As a member of the Center's board, I will advocate for expanding that program, but doing so will need added donor support. Therefore, your gifts now are critical to ensuring that we meet this moment in Jerusalem's history by providing the foundation for real and meaningful healing and restoration. The SCC and its valued donors cannot stop this war—but it can mitigate the damage the war is causing in Jerusalem and breathe hope into an atmosphere of despair.



SCC Shares Skills with Palestinian Schools in Jerusalem



SCC has become recognized as a leader in trauma treatment, and is now reaching out to Palestinian schools in Jerusalem to share strategies that can assist teachers and administrators who are responsible for helping traumatized children learn and grow. With a team including a SCC speech therapist, occupational therapist, social worker, and trauma specialist, the teachers in the schools receive counselling sessions and educational workshops. For example, one session involves the trauma specialist and social worker focusing on activities that help students release their anxieties and stress.

Another session involves the occupational therapist and the speech therapist working with teachers to identify student problems, and then to differentiate between academic and psychological issues. There is also help implementing appropriate interventions. Students who may benefit from more intensive treatment services are referred through the social worker to the trauma program and other therapeutic and educational activities at SCC.

Trauma Treatment Takes Time



Omar is a four-year-old boy who witnessed the arrest of his father. Later his mother told Omar that Dad had been imprisoned and would not be coming home for a long time. He was constantly angry and tearful and often had trouble sleeping. Several sessions at SCC focused on building trust between the therapist and the child. The therapist also worked with Omar and his mother together using construction games, play, deep breathing exercises, and physical activities. The family and the boy's school reported improvements in his responsiveness after the SCC sessions. As Omar grows so will his needs, and it is expected that he and his mother will need long-term services from SCC.

Thank you for your continued support,

The Rev. Matthew Dayton-Welch, *Chair*

Wendy Whiting Blome, PhD, *Secretary/Treasurer*

