

## FOTONNA/Tent of Nations – Winter 2012 Newsletter – December 11, 2012

**Dear Friends** – As 2012 comes to a close, it is a time to reflect on a year of upheaval and ongoing change in the Middle East. We also need to look at things that never seem to change, such as: the Nassar Family's continued work based on deep faith and strong convictions to non-violence that reach out to so many people around the world and set an example of perseverance in the face of adversity. There is a light shining in the Middle East; it surrounds this farm and keeps it warm in its intensity!

And, as other things that never seem to change, Gaza is again in the spotlight. Please check out the following link for one man's version of what really happened there last month. You can also find another interesting article on our website page at: [www.fotonna.org](http://www.fotonna.org).

<http://normanfinkelstein.com/2012/what-really-happened-in-gaza-by-norman-finkelstein/>

### **MESSAGE FROM DAOUD – Friday, December 7, 2012. Greetings from Bethlehem, the birth place of Jesus Christ.**

We were hoping the year would end with a positive message but then the attack on Gaza came and left much pain and destruction. Where are we going from there? Do we still have the energy to stand up, heal the wounds and carry on? Do we still have hope after we see every day how olive trees, homes and lives are destroyed? Do we still have faith to stop all this injustice; do we still have Love to love even those who hate us?

I woke up today, early in the morning, struggling with those questions, and I asked myself, "What is the message of Christmas for me this year?" I opened the Bible and read the verse from John 14:27 - "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

My friends, this is the message of Christmas for me this year and please allow me to share it with you. We are always waiting for the peace that is coming from the world, but this is not the peace that JESUS is talking about. It is HIS peace that we experience and feel even when we are down and in the middle of pain, sufferings, hopelessness and destruction. This is the real peace that is rooted in the ground like an olive tree. This is the message of Faith, Love and Hope that I want to share with you this Christmas.

With the end of this year, we complete 21 years of legal battle to prevent our farm from being confiscated in a nonviolent way, taking the teachings of Christ as our example with the message: "We refuse to be Enemies". The message of the **Tent of Nations** is to transform the hopelessness, the frustration, the pain and the fear into a positive power that is able to change lives and motivate people.

In the year 2012, 6,327 guests from different countries visited the **Tent of Nations**, including hundreds of volunteers who came and helped throughout the year. For all who visited, helped and supported the project in the year 2012, we say thank you so much for your prayers, support, and solidarity. We wish you happy celebrations and a wonderful New Year full of Faith, Hope and Love. Let us work together to bring Justice, Peace and Light to all Nations.

### **Blessings and Salaam – Daoud Nassar – Tent of Nations**

(A more detailed update from Daoud will be posted in early-mid January 2013. Please check [www.tentofnations.org](http://www.tentofnations.org) or [www.fotonna.org](http://www.fotonna.org) at that time.)

### **SEEDS OF HOPE – by Bill Plitt – November 2012**

On November 18, 2012, Daoud and I concluded his three-week Fall 2012 Tour of 14 cities, nine states and DC. It was a 23-day, 47-event experience that took us from CA to MA, WI to MS, IN to MD, DC to NY and to several states in between. We changed time zones so often we seldom knew the hour.

Over 3,800 people personally witnessed the telling of the Nassar family story. Of the ten previous tours, this was, indeed, the most ambitious and fruitful one since 2007. Its success was due in part to the support of our Advisory Council and in part by the individuals who had visited the farm and wanted to share Daoud's story with others in their own communities of faith and education.

Hosts opened their homes to us in Berkeley, Livermore, Santa Cruz, Fort Wayne, Indianapolis, Fitchburg and Annapolis. On college and university campuses - Stanford, Harvard, Taylor, Edgewood and Bryan - students were thirsty for new insights. Folks drove the team hundreds of miles to various venues and greeted us at the airports and fed us wonderful meals. Most of all, there were the audiences at every venue who welcomed the story of a Palestinian Christian farmer

whose non-violent resistance efforts and “refusal-to-be-enemies” message resonated with their deepest hopes for an alternative to violent activities driven by fear. The spirit and words of Daoud’s story reflected one of “faith, hope and love.”

In Jackson, Mississippi, where Daoud shared his story with a small gathering of ministers in a predominately Black church, one staff member confronted Daoud and me as we were seated, debriefing the experience together. He looked at us individually and then said, “I am not going to apologize for what I am about to say, and you may not be happy with my message, but here goes.” Neither Daoud nor I knew what to expect, but he got our attention; we rose from our seats. As he spoke, he gestured for us all to sit. He then said to Daoud, “I am extremely angry about what you said!” Our blood pressures began to rise a bit from the tenor of his voice and the vehemence in his face. He then said, “I have never heard that story before. It has always been the message from the other narrative for me. You have changed my life forever and filled my mind with new questions to which I must and will search for answers.” He then rose to embrace Daoud and thanked him for his message of hope. In almost every audience, there were many who said, “I never heard this side of the story before. Thank you for sharing it with us.”

Many new “**seeds of hope**” were spread throughout the country during those three weeks. We at **FOTONNA** are grateful for all the wonderful support!!

## **TREE PLANTING CAMPAIGN - CHRISTMAS 2012-SPRING 2013**

### **Tent of Nations - People Building Bridges - With Heart and Hand, We Change the Land**

Join us in planting 3,000 Olive and other trees. Let us, together, make Daher’s Vineyard and the **Tent of Nations** more **GREEN**. Sponsor a tree for **Tent of Nations** to keep hope alive!

At Christmas time, all the people in the world look to Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus Christ. In celebrating this joyful event, people like to give a Christmas present to their family members, beloved ones and friends. Do you know what to give as a Christmas present? We suggest to you a very special present being related to Bethlehem. Why not to give your relatives and friends an olive tree to be planted on Daher’s Vineyard in Bethlehem? This tree will be growing in solidarity with the people who are praying for Peace and Justice in the Land of the Bible.

#### **Why do we plant trees?**

- Planting trees is a protection for the environment;
- Planting trees is a way for cleaning the air and water and fights soil erosion;
- Planting trees is a symbol of hope for peace and justice in our region;
- Planting trees is bringing life to the **Tent of Nations** project, which seeks to bring people of various cultures together to build bridges of understanding, reconciliation and peace; and
- Planting trees is a way to keep Daher’s Vineyard green and prevent it from the danger of confiscation.

#### **When do we plant trees?**

- From the beginning of January until the end of March every year.

#### **What kind of trees are we planting?**

- Beside olive trees, we are planting grapes, almonds, figs and other trees.

We invite you to participate in this tree planting campaign by sponsoring a tree at a cost of \$10 each. Please make checks payable to **FOTONNA** and designate it for Tree Planting; mail to Kay Plitt - c/o **FOTONNA** - 5621 N. 9th Road, Arlington, VA 22205.

## **THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT AND FOR KEEPING HOPE ALIVE!**

**GOOD NEWS** - We have great news about the printing of Daoud’s book – **Daher’s Vineyard – Tent of Nations: My Father’s Dream**. The final 84-page book should be on hand for mailing out by December 14. The story expands on Daoud’s presentations, and you gain more insight into why this remarkable family has been able to work towards their fulfillment of ‘the dream of peace with justice’ that has been held for four generations. If you would like to purchase a book for \$15, you can simply make out your check to **FOTONNA** and mail it directly to Kay Plitt – c/o **FOTONNA** – 5621 N. 9<sup>th</sup> Road – Arlington, VA 22205 and designate it for Daoud’s Book. Any donation of \$100 or more will automatically receive a copy.

On behalf of the **FOTONNA** Steering Committee, may you all have a healthy, peace-filled 2013 – and we are thankful for the wonderful support you have provided to us at **Tent of Nations** and **Friends of Tent of Nations North America**.

**(FOTONNA is an all-volunteer non-profit organization; donations are not tax deductible.)**