

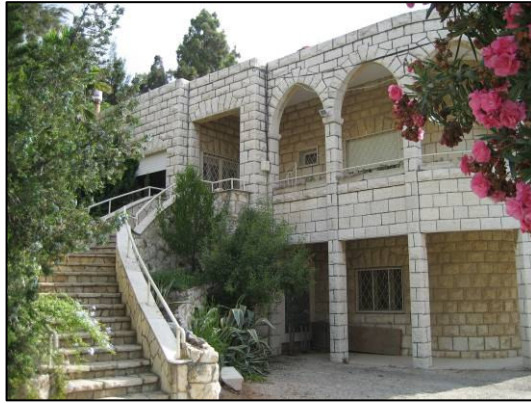
Project Report

Association of Baptist Churches in Israel – ABC

The Nazareth Center for Christian Studies

October 2006

From: Bryson Arthur
NCCS Director



Story so far

NCCS has been up and running (walking) now for around five months. It does appear that things have paused a little since May and I moved to Amman Jordan to study Arabic in late August. (We return to our home in Nazareth on 20th December). However things are still continuing to progress since a) I am not the only one concerned, but am part of a team, and b) I am still working for NCCS even whilst in Jordan.

In our first three months in Nazareth I visited many of the ABC Pastors and leaders and began, or continued, relationships with them in respect of the ABC Vision for NCCS. We began our first, informal, course for pastors on the topic of “a Theology of Preaching” in July. As we began our course the rockets started falling on Israel but nonetheless we still had a number of pastors attend, from other denominations as well as Baptist.



We sought to recruit the lecturers we need and have entered in to a commitment with two excellent Arab Christian academics. We do now need to raise two half salaries at this point. This amounts to around £12000/ \$22000 per year.

We produced our introductory brochure which we have since been distributing widely in Galilee, UK and USA and as far as our academic programmes are concerned we continued our discussions with Spurgeons College with respect to installing their Batchelor of divinity BD degree at the Center. This proposal has now been submitted to the Spurgeons Board of Governors and we are awaiting the outcome of their deliberations.

A further update on the academic programme which we hope to offer is that in September Bader Mansour and I represented ABC at the European Baptist Federation conference/council in Lyon France. (I took time out from Arabic) Over 150 senior Baptist leaders from almost all of the European Baptist Unions (and including Israel and the Middle East) were present. At this conference Bader and I had discussions with the academic leaders of the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague with respect to the possible installation of their MTh degree programme in NCCS. We met with considerable agreement. (Two ABC pastors are currently studying for an MTh and a PhD at IBTS) The Academic Dean of IBTS invited me to a conference at the Seminary in November and at that time we will iron out the details of a possible merger between us.

We hope then to be able to offer a BD taught by NCCS lecturers and conferred by Spurgeons College and a number of MTh. degrees taught or supervised by NCCS lecturers and conferred by IBTS. We are scheduled to commence our new academic programme in October 2007.

In addition to our academic programme we are also currently designing a ‘Diploma in Theology and Leadership’ for those in Christian leadership who are, as yet, untrained and do not have the means to enter the degree programme. Also, we are currently involved in the production of an extensive lay training programme which the Center will offer. Further to this I have had discussions with a possible candidate who may lead a programme especially geared for Arab Christian women.

With respect to the Center’s commitment to work for Christian unity and reconciliation in Israel I have been in touch with a possible leader of this serious and important part of our work. A senior Baptist pastor from England, who will shortly be retiring, has shown a great interest in coming to Nazareth to engage in this task. This godly man is very well known and highly recommended by a colleague here in Amman. Of course unity is so essential to our vision that we all must contribute and we are all focused to do so.

We need you to pray for:

- Funds – lecturers salaries and student scholarships.
- Students – pray that we will achieve a good number of students with which to commence.
- Commitment of the churches to the NCCS project.
- ABC strength and unity.



First class given in July 2006



NCCS leaders

Other Aspects of Development:

Board of Governors

We are presently drawing together a highly professional, capable and committed Board of Governors. The board will be structured with both an international and local arm. Two arms: one board. Subject to the overall approval of the ABC council, we hope to have the Board in place by January 2007. We have already recruited several members of the international arm and have in mind those who will be invited to join the local arm.

Please pray that we would have members of the Board whom God wills to be over us and lead us.

The Nazareth Voice

We hope that the first issue of our bulletin “the Nazareth Voice” will be forthcoming before the end of October. This publication, which carries – easy to read – theological articles and the responses to them, NCCS news and ABC news, will be distributed to all evangelical churches in Galilee and beyond. It will also have a limited distribution overseas to supporters and friends.

Web Site

We now have a web site although there is nothing on it yet, but there will be very soon.

The Center Building and the Guest House

We are slowly equipping and refurbishing the Center building and guest rooms as funds become available. As a matter of priority we are targeting the library and study area and the guest rooms. Even at this early stage we have had a steady flow of guests staying in the guest rooms.



The single room



The lounge

*Join us in prayer for our great project
be with us in spirit
and bless us with your love
We may be far away across the sea
but you are with us in the Holy Land
and we feel your presence
as we serve the Lord together*

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