

My name is Rev. Russell Melby. In November of 2019, my spouse and I visited Bethlehem, Palestine, along with other locations in Israel and Palestine. An engaging and hopeful visit was at Dar al-Kalima University (DAK) in Bethlehem, whose president is the Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb, a Palestinian academic and Lutheran Pastor. DAK's motto is "Be the Hope in Palestine." DAK is represented in the U.S. by [Bright Stars of Bethlehem](#), a nonprofit organization directed by Kris Ducett.

At Dar al-Kalima University, students study majors such as Culinary Arts, Photography, Film Making, Painting, and Authentic Tourism. In 2020, Dar al-Kalima opened a Training Center in Gaza, focusing on the role of artists as members of civil society. The Israeli bombardment of Gaza has all but destroyed the efforts of this ministry in Gaza.

Kris Ducett (kris@brightstarsbethlehem.org) provides frequent video updates of DAK's students and staff, including those desperately trying to survive the unspeakable violence in Gaza. We all are aware of the on-going death and destruction confronting Gazans. We may not be as familiar with how the war has affected daily life in the West Bank, where severe restrictions on movement and speech, harassment by armed settlers and soldiers, and forced evictions of villages have become common. In Bethlehem, lack of tourism, and war-related unemployment have made it impossible for families to pay tuition.

We can help DAK. We cannot do everything, as many have stated. We can do something. As Kris writes, " Together We Will Be the Hope."