

## Encounter The Heart of Our Faith

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### **Melodie Gabriel**

Development Officer  
CNEWA Canada

### **Being in the Holy Land is about encounter with the Lord and his people.**

I've been blessed to travel with women from across Canada to the Holy Land. For the past two summers, I have accompanied League members on a special pilgrimage with the Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA).

There's nothing quite like experiencing the Holy Land in person—walking in the footsteps of Christ, and enjoying the local food and culture. However, meeting the local people and hearing their stories brings the Holy Land to life.

I encountered the Lord not only in the churches at the holy sites but the local Christians—the “living stones”. Each person had a unique story to tell.

Last year we met Hilwa, a Christian woman from the Bethlehem area. She had worked as a nurse in many places except her hometown. She decided to take a pay cut and work at the Shepherd's Field Hospital to give back to her community. The hospital brings essential medical care to the poorest babies and mothers, regardless of their creed.

The Shepherd's Field Hospital is a cooperative run by Christians and is one of the “Velma's Dream” projects. Velma's Dream is a joint initiative with CNEWA that supports Holy Land Christians through local Christian organizations.

### **What began with a dream continues to be a reality.**

Velma's Dream began because Honorary Life Member Velma Harasen visited the Holy Land in 2010, and after witnessing the injustices happening to Christians there she felt compelled to act. The idea to support Christians in the Holy Land began to take root in the League and has grown considerably in the last few years.

The other Velma's Dream project, the Infant Welfare Centre in Jerusalem, is where at-risk teenagers receive the critical support they need to do well in school. For more information or brochures on Velma's Dream projects, please visit [www.cnewa.ca/web/velmasdream](http://www.cnewa.ca/web/velmasdream) or call 1-866-322-4441.

I want to thank you, League members. You have responded to the Holy Father's call to support your Christian brothers and sisters in the Holy Land. This support shows them they are not alone in these trying times.

### **You can contribute to building peace.**

Your financial support is timely and important, and so is your advocacy. For example, you can help prevent the separation barrier that Israeli authorities want to build in the Cremisan Valley, which would separate Christian families from their land. The League wrote a letter about this issue last year to the minister of foreign affairs.

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**Let us also join the Holy Father in prayer.**

During Pope Francis' trip to the Holy Land last May, he invited us to pray for peace since God alone can transform the hearts of people to achieve unity. Another way to answer this call is to join CNEWA in its next pilgrimage to the Holy Land this coming November. Please read below for more details.

*The Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA) is a special agency of the Holy Father, Pope Francis, supporting the good works of the Eastern Catholic Churches. In addition to our work in the Holy Land, we assist refugees from Syria and Iraq, and also do work in Ukraine. To learn more, visit [www.cnewa.ca](http://www.cnewa.ca).*

**Holy Land Pilgrimage with CNEWA for League Members**

November 12-23, 2015

Cost: \$2,900. Spaces are limited.

Discover the holy sites and the Christians of Israel and Palestine.

Find out how Velma's Dream is improving lives.

Contact: Melodie Gabriel [mgabriel@cnewa.org](mailto:mgabriel@cnewa.org) or 1-866-322-4441

[www.cnewa.ca/web/cwltrip](http://www.cnewa.ca/web/cwltrip)