

Harvest

Our Royal Patron joins us for our Gala Dinner



News and updates from the Awareness Foundation



Ambassadors for Peace

Enabling young people to be peacemakers

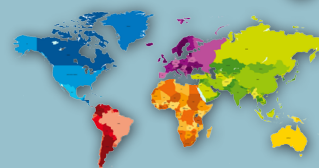
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Helping displaced children in Syria to build new lives

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The Awareness Foundation: deepening faith, building peace, living and demonstrating God's generous love around the world

Christmas Message



This Christmas, how can we all be agents of God's peace?

More than ever, the fragile state of our world compels us to think about the relationship between neighbours everywhere. As Christmas approaches so quickly, even more communities around the world are experiencing a lack of harmony between people.

We need to think again about the message of the divine baby born into our world, growing in our cities, spreading His message of peace and reconciliation and empowering us to be agents of that divine peace. This divine child grew to face death upon the Cross because He could not compromise His mission, which is to give us a better life.

At the Awareness Foundation, we have dedicated our time and effort to spread that very same message, to empower communities to embrace diversity as a blessing and a gift of God. Let us never forget that God created us in His own image and that He enriched us with *difference*.

With your support, and the support of so many around the world, we are incredibly grateful to the Lord that we are able to reach out to so many broken communities and help them, and especially their young people, to bring back peace and harmony to their lives and the lives of those around them.

On behalf of the Awareness Family, which includes our staff, volunteers, friends and supporters around the world, I wish you all a Christmas filled with the Lord's peace, love and joy. I want to invite you to think at this time of the year about how you can be instruments of peace that God can use to bring joy to other people.

May the Lord bless us all and grant us His peace.

Nadim

The Revd Nadim Nassar
Executive Director, Awareness Foundation



www.awareness-foundation.com



Soumaya Hallak entertains us during the Gala Dinner. Soumaya donated her performance, coming from Belgium specially.

Gala Dinner 2017

Our 6th Annual Gala Dinner took place this November at Copthorne Tara Hotel in Kensington. We were very honoured to be joined by our Royal Patron, HRH The Countess of Wessex GCVO.

Every year, we have our special fundraising event in London, our Gala Dinner. This is a wonderful opportunity to bring many of our supporters and friends together to thank them and to celebrate all of our achievements. At our Gala Dinner, we also honour those who have contributed to religious and cultural understanding and community harmony around the world, and we recognise our friends who have made a special contribution to the life and ministry of the Foundation.

This year, the Awareness Award recipients were Madeleine Davies (for her extraordinary work in Christian media)



and Bendu Cooper (for her extraordinary contribution to intercultural engagement through art).



Certificates of Appreciation were given to Mrs Soulaf Kanaan and Dr Douglas Model in recognition of their generous support over many years.



We should like to thank everyone who came to support us, and everyone who donated our lots and prizes. As well as an excellent dinner, our supporters enjoyed music by Soumaya Hallak and an inspiring talk by The Revd Nadim Nassar, our Executive Director. Our special guests included His Eminence The Metropolitan of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of The British Isles & Ireland, who said Grace, and Lord Gordon of Strathblane CBE.



We should like to thank Fadi Yazbek, who photographed the Gala Dinner, and our staff and volunteers who worked so hard to make the evening a success. Special thanks to Carina Longbottom who was our Master of Ceremonies for the whole evening.

Special thanks are due to Royal Jordanian Airlines and Mr George Siouty, manager of Ma'in Hot Springs Resort & Spa in Jordan, for donating our star raffle prize!

Awareness Foundation Ambassadors for Peace: Syria & Iraq

The Awareness Foundation's programme to equip young Syrian and Iraqi men and women to become peace-makers and reconcilers in their communities



In October 2017, The Revd Nadim Nassar, Executive Director, and Huda Nassar (Director for the Middle East) travelled to Lattakia, Syria for a brand-new development in our Awareness Foundation Ambassadors for Peace programme. For the first time, two separate groups of Ambassadors would be working: a new group of 65 young people just beginning on their journey as Ambassadors, and 35 of our Ambassadors who were chosen by their peers at previous events to lead the project-management stage of their work.

Advanced Programme: Lattakia, Syria 2017

Over three days, our advanced group of Ambassador 'project managers' studied very diligently, brilliantly taught by Dr Pierre Filifli, a Public Project Management expert from Lebanon (pictured below). This is the first in a series



of events designed to train the Ambassadors fully so that they can implement their own peace-building projects which will benefit the wider community. There will be a further four training sessions, covering topics including how

to write a proposal, strategic thinking, communication skills and leadership.

The engagement by the young Ambassadors was inspiring. They were challenged by what they learned, and their response was to push themselves even harder. These young people are all graduates, and among them we counted 7 engineers, 7 doctors and a number of teachers and businesspeople.

At the end of the training, we received such wonderful feedback from everyone involved. Each Ambassador received a certificate (see photo at top) both to acknowledge their hard work and to aid them in their work.



Special thanks are due to Archbishop Nikola Sawaf, Fr Atef Falah and Fr Habib Daniel, whose constant encouragement helped us to do so much more, The Revd Salam Hanna, Eid'b'Eid and to Dr Pierre Filifli who generously donated his time to teach the young people.

"The training has helped me put my own life in order so that I can go and help others."

A quote from a young Ambassador

Introductory Programme: Lattakia 2017

It was such a joy to welcome a new group of young people!

This is the first time that we have run two separate groups of Awareness Foundation Ambassadors for Peace in the same location. We used to bring up to 100 young people together for this programme, but over the years we have learnt that we should focus on quality rather than quantity. So we split the Ambassadors into two groups: one advanced (see left) and a new group who are much earlier on their



journeys.

The theme was “*Let light shine out of darkness*” (2 Corinthians 4:6a). Over three days, the young people learned about citizenship, reconciliation, and the relationship between light & darkness, peace & war, and the Cross & the Resurrection. We were greatly helped by our new Middle East Consultant **Fr Amer Kassar** from Damascus and **Fr Michael Naaman** from Homs; both of our friends drew on their extraordinary experiences of the conflict in their teaching.



We also gave them spiritual nourishment; we were blessed to have **Mr Elias Jabbour** and his wife **Petra Antoun** for the first time with us as our prayer and worship leaders.



The Syrian Orthodox Bishop, Mousa Al-Shaman, visits the Ambassadors.

Ambassadors for Peace: Erbil, Iraq 2017

In July 2017, Nadim and Huda travelled to Erbil in Iraqi Kurdistan for our Awareness Foundation Ambassadors for Peace.

Over 60 young men and women from different denominations joined us in Erbil to begin the third stage of their journey. The theme of this event was 2 Corinthians 4:7-10 (*treasure in jars of clay*). Our event had two aspects: a continuing of spiritual care and support, and the opportunity to make a genuine difference to the community. Father Nadim taught about God's treasures that lie within each of us and how we can be the image of God's love in our lives. Huda led sessions on citizenship and on the practical and spiritual meaning of being an Ambassador. The young people prepared prayers & worship themselves, and we were hugely honoured when the Syrian Orthodox Bishop, **Mousa Al-Shaman**, and **Fr Jacob** and **Fr Dawood** visited us one evening; this was a great boost for us all, showing the Church's deeper recognition and support for our work. We should like to offer special thanks to **Father Boulos Aleframi**; without his help, we would have been unable to have held this event.



In the main part of the event, the young people were split into groups of 15, and each group then chose two people to represent them. This was their first taste of democracy, and every person had the opportunity to put themselves in the spotlight, telling their peers why they would make good representatives. Then each of the groups, led by their representatives, developed two peace-building projects, including objectives, budget, implementation, and how to measure success. We then united the young Ambassadors for some more democracy: the group representatives campaigned for their own projects, before everyone voted for the winning two 2 projects.

We were amazed at the level of work the young people had put into their projects, every one of which was viable, practical and inspirational. The winners were:

Street children (age 5 to 10): a project to help Erbil's many street children, listening to them, providing them with food and clothing, and encouraging them to go back to school. They would not be given money as this would make the children a target of the many gangs.

First aid training: offering training for everyone. Medicine is expensive, and medical treatment difficult to obtain. The ready availability of trained first-aiders would save lives.

Next time, we shall begin to train the young people to become skilled project developers.

tearfund

We should like to express our great gratitude to Tearfund, whose generous support made these projects possible.

Awareness Foundation Little Heroes: Lattakia, Syria

The Awareness Foundation's programme that gives Syrian children a new hope and a new energy to live their life without fear, enabling them to build new bridges of respect and understanding.



Little Heroes in Lattakia sending their love to the world.

In early August, Huda and her team of volunteers welcomed around 200 displaced and local Syrian children to our Little Heroes camp. Once again, we were hosted by the National Evangelical Church in Lattakia.

The theme of the three days was “the Story of the Field”. A field is a place of work and it sustains life, and the analogy we drew was that we must each work to take care of our own body and our spirit and work hand-in-hand if we are to thrive as the children of God.

We followed this theme in our Bible Studies, as well as through a specially-written play which was acted out over the three days. Seven of our volunteer leaders acted in the play. Before each scene, Orange (Rana) and Apple (Wadia) taught the children the message of the day through discussing how they could be friends and work together, despite their obvious differences.



The three days reflected on

- freeing ourselves of hatred, fear and negativity;
- working to be a positive and good member of the community; and
- how God will know us by the fruits of our labours.

We divided the children according to their talents, forming five groups: theatre, music, art, crafts and writing. We presented each group with their own challenge, which was to use their talents to reflect on the theme of the programme.



Top: The children present their art projects at the exhibition
Below: Little Heroes at prayer.

The children greatly enjoyed their time with us, and their work amazed us. They showed great creativity and enthusiasm, and they started to challenge each other to do even better.

At the end of the three days, we invited the families and their friends and neighbours to come to an exhibition to see how hard the children had worked, and how wonderful were the results. They were very impressed with what they saw, and we now have a long list of new children, waiting to take their place as Little Heroes. Our heartfelt thanks go to *The Revd Salam Hanna*, our host, and to *Archbishop Nikola Sawaf, Fr Atef Falah and Fr Habib Daniel*.



Our Volunteers

It takes a lot of work to prepare for, teach and look after 200+ children. We pay special tribute to the many young people who give up their time to work on Little Heroes. Their dedication, generosity and care are a huge element in the success story of our Little Heroes programme.



The five 'artistic disciplines'



Awareness Foundation

Little Heroes: Safita, Syria

After Awareness Foundation Little Heroes in Lattakia, our team of volunteers travelled 75 miles south to Safita at the invitation of our dear friend and International Consultant Bishop Demetrios Charbak, the Greek Orthodox Bishop of Banias.

This was our second year in Safita. Over 350 children of every denomination were waiting eagerly for us. As before, the theme for this year was **“the Story of the Field”**.

Each day started with prayer, followed by a Bible story, reflections on the story, scenes from a play, art and craft activity, singing Hymns, and sports and games. During the day, we stopped for two short breaks and lunch. The children particularly enjoyed learning a new Hymn over the course of the three days, as well as a new Verse from the Bible each day, and each verse was presented in a new way. We also did this in Lattakia.

We found out that the children were so keen that they were arriving at the Essam Freij Centre even before the leaders. This experience has made the



Learning the Bible verse: for this verse, one item of ‘clothing’ is removed from the line, and the children have to remember the whole verse as it disappears one word at a time. This was great fun - and very successful!

children stronger, it has given them reassurance and comfort, and they have all made many new friends to support them in the year ahead. We believe that we have achieved our goal in both cities to bring a smile to the children and to give them a new certainty and hope.

At the end, the children did not want to go home and this gives us even more energy to bring the

Little Heroes programme to all communities in Syria and beyond. We could not have achieved our goals without the support of our team of volunteers from Lattakia, and we thank each of them.

We are especially grateful to all who generously supported this project, and to Ajnahat Al-Nasour, a Christian group which prepared and planned all of our games.



North America

Our friends in Canada and the United States work to spread our teaching and to raise funds for our work.

In June, the Board of Directors of Awareness Foundation America came together for a special meeting with a small group of our

The Board of Awareness Foundation America met in New York in June.



most dedicated Canadian and US supporters. Over two days, we formulated a very detailed Action Plan showing how best the Foundation can work in Canada and the United States. Thank you to all who took part for such an encouraging and inspiring meeting of minds.

Since then, most of the steps recommended in the Action Plan have been followed, such as using a special software system to keep in touch with friends and donors, and in the appointment of our new CEO (see page 10).

We are very grateful to everyone who took part in the discussions that led to our Action Plan.

Another direct result of our meeting was Father Nadim's trip to Toronto, Philadelphia and North Carolina. Nadim preached at Grace Church on-the-Hill, met senior clergy and even spoke at a Canadian International Council presentation in Toronto. After stopping off briefly in Washington for a meeting to discuss marketing



and PR, Nadim went with Chris Bunting, Chair of Awareness Foundation America, to take part in a large fundraising event in Philadelphia arranged by Amin Al-Laty, whom Nadim has known since the Lebanese Civil War.

Finally, Nadim flew to North Carolina to meet Christian businesspeople and leading clergy in Winston-Salem and Charlotte. For this leg of his trip, Nadim was joined by Nigel Macdonald, our own Chair of Trustees, for a special meeting with J. Frank Harrison III and Josh Dorminy.



(Left) Some of those taking part in the Philadelphia Fundraiser; (Right) Nadim meets The Revd Chip Edens, Rector at Christ Church, Charlotte NC and his team

Huda in Jordan

In October, Huda Nassar was invited by Wilton Park (an executive agency sponsored by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office) to participate in their "Youth as Peacemakers" dialogue in Jordan. The conference showcased emerging local initiatives to empower young people and support them in their role in peacemaking and peacebuilding. The conference was attended by Prince Hassan of Jordan and the British Ambassador.

Representatives from around the world talked about their experiences in peacebuilding with young people. Other topics included 'Islam for the youth generation' and 'Building a culture of peace to promote peaceful change'.

This meeting was very positive, with much sharing of experience and best practice, and the inclusion of a number of Youth Ambassadors from the UK, Kenya, Jordan and Lebanon ensured that this was not just an academic discussion!

These meetings are an ideal opportunity for the Awareness Foundation to build relationships with thought-leaders and to create partnerships for the future.



Awareness in Hong Kong

In December, The Revd Nadim Nassar returned to Hong Kong to work with our many friends and supporters on some exciting plans for 2018



(LtoR) The Revd Will Newman, KC Too, Mrs Christine Chan, Dr Joseph Chan, Nadim, The Rt Revd Andrew Chan (Bishop of Western Kowloon) and Mrs Chan

The Awareness Foundation has made many friendships in Hong Kong and, over the years, our friends have given very generously of their time and money.

This time Nadim travelled to the region not to speak and lecture but to work with our supporters on plans for a major fund-raising initiative in 2018: Peace Day.

The Awareness Foundation's central involvement in the plans for Peace Day in Hong Kong in 2018 is the brainchild of our AwarenessPeaceAmbassador Mrs Angel Hon, one of the Pacific's leading public relations, marketing and event management experts

- and also an award-winning documentary film-maker. We will be supported by our other Awareness Peace Ambassador in Hong Kong, St. John's Cathedral.

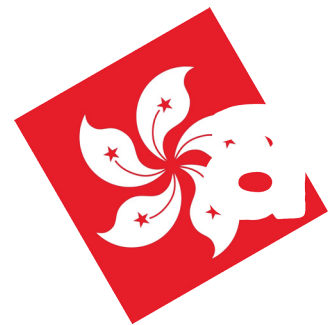
We will have plenty of news about the preparations for Peace Day in a future edition of Harvest.

We should like to thank all who have met and worked with Father Nadim during his trip, especially The Most Revd Paul Kwong, Archbishop of Hong Kong, The Revd Will Newman, Dr & Mrs Joseph Chan, KC Too, Philip Kwok, Victor Fung, Thomas Hor and David Tse & Angel Hon.

**Preparing
for Peace
Day 2018**



(Top) Elijah Fung, Nadim, Angel Hon, Thomas Hor and David Tse. (Below) The Committee meets!



Huda in Greece



Huda Nassar was invited by the University of Peloponnese in association with the Centre for Religious Pluralism in the Middle East to deliver two presentations at their Summer School in Kiato, Greece this Summer. Huda spoke on "Challenges Facing Young Christians in Syria and Iraq Today" and "Practical Ways to Empower Young People to be Peacemakers". Huda's presentations were inspired by her peace-building work with young people in Syria and Iraq,

which enabled her to add a non-theoretical aspect to the teaching. She explained the methods that we use in Awareness Foundation Ambassadors for Peace, and how we introduce advocacy to the young participants.

Professor Sotiris Roussos, the Academic Director of the Summer School, said that he was "most thankful for Huda's fascinating contribution".

We should like to thank Professor Roussos and the Mayor of Kiato for their hospitality and generosity.



Elza Nasra: Middle East Coordinator

Our newest member of the Middle East team

In all of her work in the Middle East, Huda has been helped by a team of young volunteers. Without them, Huda's job would have been much harder - perhaps impossible. One of those young people, who actually has been a volunteer for the Foundation since 2011, is Elza Nasra.

Elza began her career with the Awareness Foundation as the editor of our Arabic



website. She now coordinates our Little Heroes and Ambassadors for Peace programmes in Syria.

Elza was born in Syria, and she has lived almost her whole life there. She received her Technical and Specialist Diplomas in the Science of Tourism, which includes planning, ticketing, event arranging and hotel management - all really useful skills for the Foundation as we organise our events for children and young people. She also has a Certificate of English Studies.



Reem joined the Awareness Team in September 2017

Reem Issa: Awareness Foundation CEO

Reem joined the Awareness Foundation in mid-2017 as a volunteer and she was appointed as Chief Executive Officer in September the same year. She was born in England and grew up in Syria. She lived in 5 continents before returning to England to join the Awareness team. She also speaks several languages.

Reem received her Master's degree in Business Administration Management from the University of Phoenix, USA and specialized in Human Resources Management. Prior to that, she received her Bachelor's degree in English Language & Literature from Damascus University.

She worked as a Global Human Resources Professional at several global Fortune 500 companies all over the world. She was honoured with the "Outstanding HR Manager" award for outstanding achievement, and was elected as a chair for the Conflict Resolutions Committee. Reem also lectured in HR Management, International Business & Management, Project Management and other subjects in China for four North American Universities.

When Reem lived in Brazil, in addition to her work, she volunteered to educate children aged 6-12 in the Christian faith in order to plant the love of Jesus.

We are delighted to welcome Reem to the team. She has special responsibility for developing our strategic plans, and she works with Nadim to oversee the operations of the Foundation. Reem's appointment comes at a time when the Foundation is going through a period of great growth and development, and we are very grateful to her for her guidance and insight at such a crucial stage in our 'evolution'.

The Awareness Team

Executive Director:	The Revd Nadim Nassar
Chief Executive Officer:	Reem Issa
Operations Director:	St. John Wright
Middle East Director:	Huda Nassar
PAX Producer:	Josie Child
Middle East Coordinator:	Elza Nasra



PAX: The Awareness Foundation's Media Arm



Josie filming a Syrian artist for a future video

Today, the media is full of bad stories about religion. The internet is awash with videos that are often misguided or hate-filled as faith is misrepresented, manipulated, or simply ignored. The result is that faith is no longer perceived to be a force for good; many people of faith lack confidence and our communities are becoming increasingly inharmonious.

Through PAX, a new programme of the Awareness Foundation, we seek to redress the balance by providing thought-provoking short films that challenge viewers to recognise the world-changing power of a living faith. Our videos demonstrate an authentic and relevant Christianity that celebrates diversity and provides an answer to extremism and hatred.

We are fortunate to have Josie Child as our Producer. Josie joined the Awareness Foundation in 2016 after graduating with first class honours from Durham University. She has been involved in Christian education since setting up a Christian Union at her school. Josie was also a key member of her university's TV and film-making society, Durham Student Productions. Josie received the Duke of Edinburgh Award in 2010.

Our videos cover a wide range of relevant topics, some of which you can see in the box, top right. Through discussion of topics such as politics and faith, interfaith relationships, and how to combat extremism, PAX seeks

to build peace through insisting upon compassion and respect. We are passionate about equipping communities and individuals to recognise the world-changing power of a living faith.

PAX has two broad aims:

- to encourage Christians to live out their faith practically and confidently, and
- to provide a counter-narrative of peace and understanding to hateful, extremist, and ignorant ideologies online.

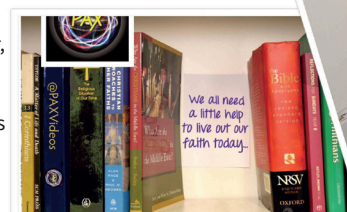
Contributors this year have included:

- Sayed Ali Abbas Razawi
- Andy Flannagan (Director, Christians in Politics)
- The Revd Canon Chris Chivers (Principal, Westcott House)
- Prof. John Bryant
- Mitch Bean
- Rob Thompson and Elliot Steinberg (Council of Christians and Jews)
- Dawood Masood
- Will Firth

Recent videos

- Jesus: Righteous Revolutionary, or just another nice guy?
- Peace is Not a Treaty - It is a Culture (**71,000 views**)
- Is the End of ISIS the End of War? (**54,000 views**)
- Salt & Light: Why Should I Engage with Politics?
- A Radical Response to Persecution (**43,000 views**)
- Standing Up for peace in Syria
- Science, God and the Science of God
- 'In the mud, and in the Glory': a Refugee at Easter
- Why Syria Can't Decide the Syrian War
- Cake, Copernicus and Christ: What Does Science have to do with Faith?
- Overcoming Terror: Why Glorifying Death is Not Faith
- 4 Reasons the Bible is Still Relevant Today
- Mitch Bean: From Lawbreaker to Lawmaker
- Why do 'Interfaith'?

This year, we have filmed and released 20 videos in English and in Arabic. We have also worked in partnership with Christians in Politics, the Council for Christians and Jews, TBN, Stage 3 Films and United Christian Broadcasters.



LIFE FROM A FAITH PERSPECTIVE

We know that it can be tough to live out your faith today in a world of diversity, catastrophe and division. From faith in the world of politics, to the compatibility of science and faith, how faith can resist extremism, our growing online collection of short but challenging videos is here to help!

We would love for you to connect with us. Find us by googling '@PaxVideos', subscribe on YouTube and watch out for future releases!





Awareness Foundation Little Heroes, Lattakia, Syria 2017



Nadim, Huda and Elza with the Ambassadors for Peace, Lattakia, Syria 2017

How to give in the UK

GIVE BY CHEQUE: Please send **cheques**, made payable to the Awareness Foundation, to:
Awareness Foundation, Lodge House, 69 Beaufort Street, London SW3 5AH, United Kingdom

OTHER METHODS: Please contact us if you would like to make a gift **online** using your debit/credit card or PayPal, or **electronically**, directly from your bank.

Gift Aid: If you are a UK taxpayer, please contact us as Gift Aid could add at least 25% to the value of your gift.

United States

Awareness Foundation America is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

GIVE BY CHECK: Please send checks, made payable to Awareness Foundation America, to:
Awareness Foundation America, PO Box 217, Ross CA 94957 USA.

Please enclose a note requesting that the funds be used for the Awareness Foundation's programs.

Please contact us directly at usa-can@awareness-foundation.com if you have any questions, especially regarding possible tax benefits related to donations made in North America.

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How to Contact Us

Awareness Foundation

Lodge House, 69 Beaufort Street, London SW3 5AH United Kingdom Phone: +44 (0)20 7730 8830 E-mail: mail@awareness-foundation.com

North America

Awareness Foundation America

E-mail: usa-can@awareness-foundation.com

Mail: Awareness Foundation, PO Box 217, Ross, CA 94957 USA

Middle East

Awareness Foundation Middle East

E-mail: coordinator@awareness-foundation.com

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