

## Tent of Nations



The Olive Oil Ministry is donating \$9,500 to Tent of Nations, a Palestinian Christian family-owned farm on a hilltop about 9km southwest of Bethlehem. The Nassar family has owned it since 1916. The farm grows olives, grapes, almonds, and other fruit & vegetables and keeps a small selection of animals such as sheep, chickens, rabbits, pigeons, dogs, and a donkey. The family is in the process of increasing the farm's production as it strives to make the farm commercially profitable.

The farm (also known as Daher's Vineyard) has been under continuous pressure from government and private Israeli sources since 1991 to force the family from the land, despite their well-documented legal ownership as confirmed by successive Ottoman, British and Jordanian ruling governments. The Nassar family resists all such pressures solely through non-violent means, responding to each new onslaught by recourse to Israeli courts and to international support generated by the thousands of visitors and volunteers who have visited and/or worked on the farm over the past 30 years.

Tent of Nations has been the principal beneficiary of the Olive Oil Ministry since 2010. We support the Nassar family's commitment to maintain their legal ownership of the land through steadfast nonviolent resistance to continuing official and unofficial Israeli efforts to expropriate legally owned Palestinian land, even at great cost to the family in ongoing legal fees and endless requests for redundant land surveys. The family's struggle is emblematic of the struggle of all Palestinians to retain legal ownership of their property.

Daher's Vineyard spans around 100 acres and requires a lot of work to keep it cultivated and flourishing. International volunteers who stay and work at the farm tending to the livestock, or working on agricultural and construction projects do much of the work. The Covid-19 crisis has exacerbated the continuous political, social, and economic





pressures facing Palestinians by constricting access to the farm as most roads are closed, and people are not permitted to move freely. In addition, all of the short- and long-term volunteers, as well as many visiting groups, which were planning to come in March, April and the summer months have had to cancel, which affects the farm economically. The intensive spring work that needs to be done from planting to plowing cannot be done without this international help and has had to be postponed due to the current situation.

In November 2019, seven pilgrims from Rock Spring and Westmoreland Congregational UCC Churches travelling on OOM scholarships joined nine other young adults from Overlake Christian Church in Redmond, Washington on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and Bethlehem. They visited holy sites in the two cities and met with Palestinian families and organizations to learn about the reality of daily life under occupation. A crucial component of their visit was four days spent living and working at the Tent of Nations farm.

Samantha Steinfeld from Westmoreland described her experience: *“My time at Tent of Nations gave me hope in a hopeless situation. The Nassar family has overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles in order to create a land of extravagant welcome. I was humbled and honored to be able to spend four days working on the farm, watching the unstoppable Nassar family do everything. Truly, I mean everything. They welcome newcomers onto their land, educate visitors about the conflict, lead tours, and share stories. They dig ditches, mix concrete, and move rocks. They care for their animals, cook meals, and plant crops. And they do this all without running water, with limited electricity, and with constant pressure to surrender their land to Israel. They have taken an impossible situation and created a place that serves as an international symbol for hope, for resilience, and for unending empathy. It is a privilege to be able to support their work.”*

