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Spotlight



A Church Without Walls

BY STEFANI MCDADE



DANNY AWAD RINGS A BRASS BELL to announce Sunday morning service at Baraka Presbyterian Church in Bethlehem. This is a tradition from the fourth century, when church bells could be heard throughout the Middle East, calling believers to worship. Until recently, Bethlehem—honored as [Continued on pg 46](#)



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the place of Jesus' birth—was predominantly Christian. But over the last few decades, Christianity has become the minority as more families chose to leave the political and economic situation in the West Bank.

“It is very difficult to live here,” says Awad. Isolated behind a 25-foot barrier, Baraka—one of the few remaining evangelical congregations in the area—has dwindled from hundreds to less than 50 members.

Awad grew up hearing his father, who was a pastor before him, share stories about the years before the wall, when the church had plentiful resources, high attendance, and a record of growth. And although much has changed politically and economically since his father's era, dedication to ministry has not wavered. The church continues to operate two fellowships—one in Bethlehem and another in Shepherd's Gate—as well as two outreach centers and a variety of small groups and Bible studies that gather in home settings.

There is also the House of Hope, a full-time care center for youth with special needs, who have been cast off from traditionally Muslim families. For many, a disability is seen as a shameful curse from Allah. Awad has found Scripture and teaching on the In Touch Messenger useful in offering the Christian perspective

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on this, particularly in his work with blind or developmentally delayed children. Many of these young people have come to faith as they encountered God's Word and the tender love of Awad's congregation.

Baraka also operates a daycare center, which has a favorable reputation among locals. Fully aware of its Christian emphasis, many Muslim parents drop their children off here and return week after week—even when the boys and girls start singing “Jesus Loves You” on the drive home.

Still, Awad prays for more workers and resources to keep up with the plentiful harvest. “Many are coming to Christ here,” he says. “We baptize a lot of Muslims.” Despite the sizable political obstacles and economic hardships these believers face, Awad trusts that when God builds His church, no physical or spiritual barrier will be able to overcome it.



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