

Energizing Ancient Palestinian Crafts



For the whole Mediterranean region, the olive tree has been a symbol of life and hope as well as being a practical commodity providing fruit, oil, fuel, light, ornaments, medicine, and carpentry for the people.

Cross stitch embroidery has been very important to the identity of the Palestinian people as each region has had its own unique patterns of stunning color combinations and designs.

Tourists and pilgrims have flocked to Palestinian marketplaces in the past seeking hand-carved olive wood pieces of beauty and delight to touch, exquisite embroidery creations, ceramics with traditional patterns, extra virgin olive oil, and many other Palestinian products.

Life under occupation in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem has deteriorated over the past few years, with a proliferation of Israeli military incursions, curfews, roadblocks, checkpoints, and the Separation Barrier (also called a wall or a fence). These difficulties, combined with greatly diminished tourism, create an enormous challenge for craft artisans to continue their trades and support their families.

Therefore by buying and selling Palestinian works of art, we are:

Meeting needs for human survival;

Helping to protect Palestinian heritage;

Supporting community ministries;

Recognizing the dignity, creativity and self-determination of the people;

Educating the public about the Israeli-Palestinian situation;

Giving very unique works of art as gifts; and finally

Saying to the Palestinian people we care and you are not alone.

Suggested Sources for Palestinian Products

Sunbula supports Palestinian craft producers-- women's groups, artisan cooperatives and disabled people's organizations. It is a nonprofit fair trade organization housed in St. Andrews, the Presbyterian Church of Scotland in Jerusalem. **Contact:** www.sunbula.org

Pal Craftaid makes available consignment orders, especially olive wood and embroidery items, to congregations and groups all over the country usually during Advent. This volunteer, nonprofit ministry provides work and economic support to Palestinians and their families, and Christian managed ministries. **Contact:** The Rev Elizabeth Knott, liznconnie@aol.com

Calendar for Palestine and Gift Bazaar produces a calendar of beautiful pictures of Palestine each year - the 2006 calendar is Children of Palestine, The Holy Land. The 6 page Gift Book lists Palestine products, crafts, books, videos, music CD's, Travel Agents and organization, each with web sites for ordering and for information and action. **Contact:** Robin Wagar, bsw1942@aol.com

The International Center of Bethlehem Gift Shop (Al-Kahf) at Christmas Lutheran Church in Bethlehem markets the work of local artisans at the on-site shop and online. Available handicrafts include: Christmas Collection, glass products, calligraphy, ceramics, olive wood products, mosaics, paintings, embroidery, books, CD's and silver jewelry. **Contact:** www.annadwa.org

Atfaluna Crafts in Gaza is run primarily by deaf adults to produce and market quality, creative Palestinian crafts, home accessories and furniture. The project provides income for 250 women who work from home to produce embroideries. **Contact:** infor@atfaluna.net

Bethlehem Crafts works specifically with Palestinian Christians to prevent churches and Holy places from becoming "common market places" for the rest of the population. **Contact:** www.BethlehemCrafts.net

Grotto Craft in Bethlehem has smaller items such as wooden boxes, caravans, ceramics, small purses, and candles. **Contact:** Sue Yeane, sue-dy@avalon.net

There are many, many more fine sources for crafts and olive oil products from Palestine and elsewhere in the Middle East. We urge you to seek these out for your family, your congregation, or your presbytery.

Ideas for Selling Palestinian Crafts

- † Display and sell products at craft fairs in churches, malls, presbytery meetings, women's gatherings and in other special events in your community
- † Hold house parties in your neighborhood, or with friends
- † Start a study group before selling to learn about traditional Palestinian works of art that identify the people and are symbols of life and hope for them
- † If you have a fair trade coffee cart on Sundays, add fair trade olive oil and small inexpensive Palestinian crafts
- † Once a month feature a Palestinian craft as a gift for birthdays, anniversaries
- † In larger churches, create a gift shop with items from many different countries
- † In your church newsletter:
 - feature a particular craft article with its history and personal stories
 - feature an article on olive trees in Palestine
- † Put pictures of Palestinian crafts on the bulletin board, especially in October, November, and December before an alternative market or holiday craft fair
- † Use olive wood candles for monthly Prayer Vigil for Peace in the Middle East (<http://www.pepm.org/PrayerVigil/PrayerVigilHome.htm>) on the date assigned for your state
- † Adopt an artisan to help sell their products
- † Cooperate with other churches and organizations to sell crafts at fairs around the community