

BibleLands

..... Overseas Partner Fact Sheet.....

The Four Homes of Mercy

How it all started

The Four Homes of Mercy grew out of one woman's vision and her response to a need. Mrs Katherine Siksek, a Palestinian Christian in Jerusalem, used to visit and help destitute people in Jerusalem. In 1940, she was called to the bedside of a dying woman who had two disabled children. This lady, having no one else to ask, told Katherine Siksek: "I trust my children into your care." Katherine Siksek, seeing their need, accepted this trust and thus began her lifetime's work.

The work soon expanded to include a home for orphans, care of the elderly and a maternity hospital, in four different buildings; hence the name. In 1964, the Four Homes moved from Beit Jala, near Bethlehem, to its single site in Bethany.

Mrs Siksek died in 1973, but her work is continued by her daughter, Mrs Henrietta Farradj, and a committee of Palestinian Christian women. Over the years, the centre's focus has changed to that of providing rehabilitation services for the physically disabled. However, the values that began the Four Homes still provide the foundation of the work and anyone who is in need of the care that the centre can give is eligible to enter, regardless of race or religion.



Left: The Revd Deaconess Evelyn Morris took a great interest in the Four Homes of Mercy, telling King Hussein of Jordan about the work. It was he who gave the land in Bethany, where the centre stands today. Its name comes from the four different buildings which used to house the work when it was located in Beit Jala; however, now it operates out of just one building.

Current Activities

The centre cares for up to 90 residents, most of whom are wheelchair users and many of whom have additional special needs. For the majority of these people, the centre is their home, although some residents stay just for a short time to receive rehabilitation, before returning to their families. The centre cares for people of all ages, from just 5 years to 95!

The centre is divided into different living areas, catering for the residents' different needs. Some areas are ideal for residents with significant physical disabilities, whilst others cater for those who have both physical disabilities and special needs. Residents of similar age live together, whether in the children's section, the men's section or the women's section.

Staff provide individual rehabilitation programmes for each person, ranging from helping them to use a spoon to eat, to assisting them in walking. Sometimes the most important concern is to maintain a person's current level of ability, particularly for those people whose disabilities are degenerative, helping them to keep the independence that they have. The staff work with both the residents and their families on these rehabilitation programmes and provide support to those who return to live with their families, helping them to continue to implement the programme at home.



Quality of life is not solely based on good physical health and so, as well as the regular physiotherapy and occupational therapy that the residents receive, the centre also offer therapeutic activities such as music, games, cooking and swimming. The Peace Garden (left) has full access to wheelchair users.

Social and recreational activities enable the residents to enjoy a higher quality of life. The fact that people's practical, everyday needs have been taken care of gives them greater opportunity to enjoy other interests and pursuits.

In addition to this, several residents are given jobs around the Homes, such as receptionist or shop keeper, that help to give them a purpose in life.

Key facts

Founded: 1940

Location: Bethany

First Grant from BibleLands: 1967

BibleLands' Grant: £31,644 p.a.



For people with profound disabilities, achievements which would seem unremarkable to us can take on a particular significance. This photo captures the moment Suhaila, who has cerebral palsy and has very little control over any of her limbs, was able to hold a spoon for the first time in her life. You can see from her smile how much it meant to her!

The Four Homes also has a wheelchair workshop. A chair that does not meet a person's needs is uncomfortable and can lead to pressure sores and further deformities. Therefore, the wheelchair workshop assesses residents' needs and designs effective seating to meet them. Other health services, including those of a dentist and optician, are also offered to residents on a regular basis.

The Four Homes of Mercy is unique in welcoming and accepting those who would otherwise be rejected by society. Someone who was desperately looking for refuge for an elderly woman reluctantly admitted that she was bedridden, incontinent, and wandering in her mind and was amazed to find that these 'failings' were seen as qualifications for her admission to the Four Homes. Without the Four Homes, there would be nowhere to shelter these most vulnerable and friendless men, women and children.

Although the centre asks for fees from those who are able to pay, many patients only give a token amount and several are too poor to pay anything. Less than 3% of the centre's income comes from the residents' fees and a little income comes from local outpatients who use the services of the Physiotherapy department. Apart from these funds, the centre relies entirely on donations, such as those made by BibleLands' supporters and the 'Friends of the Four Homes of Mercy' in the United States of America.

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