

May 2005, *Equipping*

## **A Moment for Celebration: A Mission Moment**

*We invite you to share the following story with your congregation. It should take no more than 2 minutes to read aloud. You might also wish to include the story in your church newsletter.*

### **Nazareth Village**

On the slopes of a hill in the center of modern day Nazareth in northern Israel, is Nazareth Village, a re-creation of the ancient town in which Jesus grew up. Nazareth Village is a place where visitors from Christian, Muslim and Jewish backgrounds not only experience the ancient setting of Jesus' day, but they also encounter Jesus' life and teaching. Michael Hostetler is director of Nazareth Village and supported by MC Canada Witness. He wrote recently about an experience with local visitors.

"I just had an amazing tour," said Amer, Nazareth Village Program Director. "It was amazing, really amazing." Amer was elated. He had just started the tour with a Jewish couple, when Amer (an Israeli Arab Christian) got a call

from the office to lead another group of Jewish visitors through the Village.

Minutes later the second Jewish couple joined the tour already in progress. The two Jewish couples did not know each other before the tour. A tour that normally takes an hour and half was approaching four hours but "They didn't want the tour to end and neither did I."

"If the early Christians were Jewish, what was the difference between early Christianity and Judaism?" the visitors asked. Amer was challenged by the guests and their questions which started early in the tour. One of the wives, a history teacher, shared how in the past she had read from the New Testament to her class when teaching about the first-century Jewish life. In the course of the tour, Amer referred to the prophecies and how Christians believe they were fulfilled through Jesus' ministry, death and resurrection. They read from Psalms and Isaiah. Amer spoke about the Passover and the need for sacrificial blood and how Christians see Jesus' blood serving as sacrificial blood for all of humanity.

"There is a lot of ignorance throughout the land about who Christians are and what they believe," reflects Amer. The Village provides a place for Jewish, Muslim and Christian people to meet. It provides an opportunity for all who come to learn about Jesus, within the context in which he actually lived.

The couples left promising to return. Amer's elation stemmed from the quality and depth of dialogue between himself and his guests.



Mira and Naomi are two of the people visitors meet at Nazareth Village.