The weather has changed in Ramallah and we now have the first rain. The olive picking season follows the first rain and the school community is looking forward to picking the olives from the trees on the campus. I am writing this from Pendle Hill in Wallingford, Pennsylvania. Just as in Ramallah the weather is changing and the leaves are turning from green to a golden brown. Pendle Hill was established in 1930 as a Quaker study center designed to prepare its adult students for service both in the Religious Society of Friends and in the world. Its mission was both educational and religious. It was to be a school rooted in Quaker community life where students and staff would live according to Quaker principles and practices and where learning would be experiential as well as intellectual. It is named after the Pendle Hill located in the east of Lancashire, England. In 1652, George Fox climbed Pendle Hill where he had a vision of a “great people to be gathered.” Looking at the school’s history to please contact lmurra@rfs.edu.ps

GLANCED AT RFS HISTORY

Established in 1869, the Ramallah Friends School’s history is closely tied with the history of Palestine. Over the last century, the school has experienced Turkish, British, Jordanian, and Israeli occupation, world wars, and closures. The RFS, in its checkered political history has served not only as schools, but also as a center for refugees, a hospital, and a center for community lectures, concerts, and other cultural activities. Here is a quick glance at RFS during the last 148 years of Palestinian history:

**The Ottoman Empire:** In October 1869, Friends Girls School opened as “The Girls Training Home of Ramallah.” The fifteen students who enrolled the first year came from Lydd, Jaffa, Aboud, Jerusalem, Beit and Ramallah, and six years later the first class graduated. A Boys Training Home was founded in 1903, and later became the Friends Boys School.

**First World War:** The Girls Training Home (now the Lower School) and the Boys School (now the Upper School), like all other schools in Palestine, were closed throughout the war. During those years Turkish and their British troops occupied the buildings. British troops used the Boys School as a hospital in 1917. British Mandate: Both schools reopened in 1919. At the newly named Friends Girls School, day students and boarders were accepted. Electric light was first used at the school in 1923.

**Meta: The Partition (1948):** The partition of Palestine in 1948 and the subsequent expulsion of many Palestinians then changed the character of the School. Friends Meeting House and School grounds became the temporary home for refugees. Student numbers swelled to accommodate refugees from the coastal cities.

**Jordistan Rule:** The School had a relatively peaceful RFS during the Jordanian period from 1948-1967. In the late 1950s enrollment figures for the FBI (now the Upper School) rose dramatically, reaching a peak in 1966 at 320 students.

**Israel Occupation:** Following Israeli occupation in 1967, the boarding sections in both schools were closed, as students from neighboring countries were no longer able to come. In 1990, the campus of the Girls School became a co-educational Elementary School and Kindergarten and the campus of the Boys School became a co-educational High School.

**Palestinian National Authority:** Following the Oslo agreements, the uneasy peace brought greater stability to the School with the emergence for the first time of a government in waiting that had a real interest in Palestinian education. The second Intifada began in September 2000 and RFS grounds were at the center of the cities exposed to a new level of violence with sequences of nightly shelling from Israeli tanks and light artillery and attacks by helicopter gunners.

Letter from RFS Head of School

Welcome to the second issue of Olive Press. The weather has changed in Ramallah and we now have the first rain. The olive picking season follows the first rain and the school community is looking forward to picking the olives from the trees on the campus.

I am writing this from Pendle Hill in Wallingford, Pennsylvania. Just as in Ramallah the weather is changing and the leaves are turning from green to golden brown. Pendle Hill was established in 1930 as a Quaker study center designed to prepare its adult students for service both in the Religious Society of Friends and in the world. Its mission was both educational and religious. It was to be a school rooted in Quaker community life where students and staff would live according to Quaker principles and practices and where learning would be experiential as well as intellectual. It is named after the Pendle Hill located in the east of Lancashire, England. In 1652, George Fox climbed Pendle Hill where he had a vision of a “great people to be gathered” waiting for him. It was this vision that led to his forming the Quaker movement.

Ramallah Friends School has a strong connection with Pendle Hill because we also are based on Quaker values of simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality, and stewardship. It is important that we understand what these principles mean in our daily lives. Based in Ramallah RFS is a school surrounded by the conflict that affects Palestine. We talk about peace and we promote peace but we should also understand how peace is understood by Friends. Peace is not just the absence of war and violence – it is more than that. It is about our day to day relationships with our families, our neighbors, our students and our colleagues. Peace is about how we cope with people we may find sometimes difficult and different from us. It is about accepting there are different ways of doing things and that different does not mean worse. It is about right relationships. It is an important understanding to bring to our students and our community.

Brian Jawad 02  RFS Development and Communications Manager

Adrian Moody  Head of School

RFS Archive Project

As our beloved school turns 148 years old this year, we near the 150th anniversary of its establishment. A hundred and fifty years of history, culture, and identity lay within our school walls. The RFS Archive Room will be located in the Middle School building, Upper campus, and is set to include all RFS historical documents, photographs, and other historical materials. The archive project locates, collects and preserves all types of records relating to the school’s history.

The history of the RFS is a vital part of Palestinian history, and the history of Ramallah itself. We invite any member of the RFS community who may own any historical documents related to the school to please contact lmurra@rfs.edu.ps. We promise to take good care of your photos, all we need to do is scan them and return them to you.

Please help us gather this wonderful institution’s history together!

Alumni in the Spotlight

The Upper campus was delighted to receive special guest RFS Graduate, Dr. Ibrahim Muhawi (Class of 1954). Dr. Muhawi is a world-known writer and academic, and has taught in universities in USA, Amman and Palestine. Dr. Muhawi remembers the Upper campus when the RFS was still a boarding school. “The dormitory was the 2nd floor of the Main bldg., that is where boarding students used to sleep.” - Ibrahim Muhawi

As he walked around campus, Dr. Muhawi told the Olive Press about the hardship he faced in trying to come home after finishing his studies in the USA. After the war of 1967, it was difficult and sometimes impossible for him and his school peers to come back to Palestine.

In 2011, Dr. Muhawi won the PEN Translation Prize for his translation of Mahmoud Darwish’s Journal of an Ordinary Grief. He had achieved his Ph.D from the University of California, Davis in 1965.

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**A Lifetime at the RFS**

Donn Hutchinson – RFS retired English teacher

I can remember the first day I came through the gate at the Friends Boys School (Upper School). I had never been on a plane, had never been more than 150 miles away from home, hadn’t finished college, was young, inexperienced, naive, and had black wavy hair. It was a lifetime ago.

That first year of teaching was a horrible year. I was a terrible teacher. I drew circles on the board and made talkative students put their noses in the circle. I would occasionally shout and scream. Most of the students had no idea what I was screaming about and took pleasure in my crazy performance. They would look at the raving man and smile. It was a lifetime ago.

When I went out the gate for the last time that first year, I vowed I would never be a teacher and I would never return. It was a lifetime ago. When staff posed for the 2012 faculty picture, I found myself standing in the same spot, on the same step, where I had stood for a faculty photo forty-seven years ago.

The Ramallah Friends School (RFS) has been the frame in which I lived my adult life. My late wife’s family had been associated with the Friends since the first Quakers came to Ramallah (1869). My children, my wife, both her parents, her sister, her aunts, and her grandparents were all associated with RFS. It has been a lifetime. Looking back, I can see the faces of so many students and teachers – and still remember most of their names. I have seen students become parents and grandparents, and still remember most of their names. I have seen students become parents and grandparents.

I see them today and remember how they were so many years ago. I see the face of the child in the adult of today. That has been a blessing. Those chapters of my life have given me wonderful stories; it has given me the opportunity to meet amazing individuals; I am thankfully that Allah has written the script of my life as it has been written. I am thankful for the chapters that have been. I am thankful for those I have taught. I have loved my students. I always thought I should have had dozens of children, and in a way I have. There is blessing in that, and I am grateful.

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**Significant Milestones in the Development of RFS**

Frieda Khayat – Lower School Principal

As a RFS graduate, a mother of two RFS graduates, and currently the Principal of the Lower School, I am privileged to share RFS’s enduring journey throughout the history of Palestine. Founded in 1869, RFS has been a part of Palestine’s dramatic history. It witnessed and withstood transitions from the Ottoman Empire, WWI, WWII, British mandate, Jordanian rule, Israeli occupation, and the Palestinian National Authority. Steadfastly, it continues to nurture intellectual freedom and influence generations in spite of all challenging instabilities.

RFS has not only served as an educational institution in Palestine yet it has supported Palestinians in times of crisis as a hospital in 1997 and a refugee shelter in 1948. RFS dynamically transforms to cater to the needs of the Palestinian people. Nevertheless, it strives to provide opportunities for all the future of the Palestinian people and to embed Quaker values in daily life practices and attitudes of all.

Originally, Quaker Friends missioned to educate people in the surrounding villages of Ramallah in 1869. Opening their hearts to Palestine, they turned a Palestinian two-story house into the first friends School, “Girls Training Home of Ramallah” with intentions to educate and empower girls by giving them the opportunity to flourish in their communities. In 1889, the first principal assigned to the Friends School was Mrs. Katie Gabriel. Triumphant, her first fifteen girls graduated six years later. During an era where education was unheard of, the Friends Girls School had girls graduating year after year and steadily begun to expand its facilities. In 1897, a dormitory was established in addition to a dining room, adjoining room and a hallway. Development Stages at the Lower School In 1897, a dormitory was established in addition to a dining room, adjoining room and a hallway. In 1910, a third floor was added. Later in 1920, the home economic cottage was built. Other additions included the Whittier building in 1934, Shiloh building in 1952, and the new kindergarten building in 2011. An additional floor to the kindergarten building is currently under construction. In 1990, that (RFS) was united with the Friends Boys School (FBS) to accommodate grades KG–12 into one coeducational school with FGS as the Lower Campus and RFS as the Upper Campus.

Generation after generation, RFS continues to inspire and prepare the youth of Palestine for the unknown future. Our Quaker Friends wholeheartedly planted that very first seed in 1869, and it has been fruitful ever since.*

**MOASIC**

Riyam Kafit – Upper School Principal

Who isn’t tempted by the allure of a historical school? A school that stood the test of time, and still does. A school that has so much tradition you cannot help but be drawn to the old stories, the myths and the legends.

The Upper School that was founded as the Friends Boys School in 1901 is nothing short of legendary. Today the home of 700 plus students, its walls seem to be waiting to tell us the stories of many generations past.

My friend Graham Leonard came to visit a few weeks ago, Graham is a former teacher at FBS and an avid educator who is still very much active in educational discourse. I love his visits, and the hour I get to spend with him leaves me with much to think about for months to come. This time around he came bearing gifts. He gave me several Friends Boys School publications from the 1920’s onwards. He asked that those be properly archived, and I dutifully promised that they would, only after I took the time to read through them.

The publications included journal entries from students, a letter from the principal portraying The Principal’s Desk, a historical account of how Quakers entered Palestine, Syria and Jordan, and much more. What was striking the most was the legacy of what is intuitively passed on from one generation to the other, and the wonderful anecdotes that someone who feels an umbilical connection to the school would appreciate.

**RFS in the 1950s**

Dr. Graham Leonard visited both campuses and spoke with students at LS Chapel meeting. He had taught at the RFS in the 1950s.

“Come to Ramallah first in 1905, 67 years ago, and fell in love with Palestine and came back.” ~ Dr. Graham Leonard

Dr. Leonard remembers arriving in Ramallah from Tennessee, USA to find the first school founded with Palestinian refugee students in the 1948 exodus. The Quaker Friends Meetinghouse had been occupied by refugees until May 1950, and most of RFS’s students at that time were refugees from Northern Palestine who fled to the West Bank.

“We could see Tel Aviv and Lid, there weren’t any high building yet, but we all knew we could not reach there!” ~ Dr. Graham Leonard

Dr. Graham Leonard and Lower School Principal Frieda Khayat

You cannot help but feel that you are part of a bigger picture. A mosaic of human beings who served this community generously.

Schools are such human places; their psyches reflect that of their community. And because they are human places, simple stories like the first time Chemistry was offered at FBS (around 1921) become significant and hold a meaning beyond just dates and history to a principal serving her term in 2017. Each one of us is either an alumna, a parent, or an employee, or all of the above. Each one of us is a brush stroke on the RFS canvas.*

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**Upcoming Dates and Events**

**November 4th**
- LS – End of 1st Quarter, no school.
- US – Parent-Teacher Conference

**November 5th & 7th**
- LS – Parent-Teacher Conference

**November 15th**
- Holiday (no school)/ Independence Day

**November 16th**
- LS – End of 1st Trimester, no school.
- US – End of 1st Trimester, no school.

**November 18th & 20th**
- LS – Parent-Teacher Conference

**November 25th**
- Staff professional development workshop (half-day)

**December 2nd**
- Holiday (no school) – Al Mawlid Al Nabawi
- Islamic Holiday (tentative)

**December 4th – 14th**
- LS – Report cards distribution
- 2nd tuition payment due (Grades 10th-12th)
- 3rd tuition payment due (Grades KG – 9th)

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*For all universities in USA and Canada. Please check application deadlines of your specific universities online.