



ANNUAL
Report

SUSTAIN

2020

Bethlehem Bible College

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Sustain 2020 in Hindsight

Our theme going into the year 2020 was "Sustain 2020." Little did we know what this was going to mean. In hindsight this phrase would have an entirely different meaning that we anticipated. According to dictionary.com the definition of sustain is:

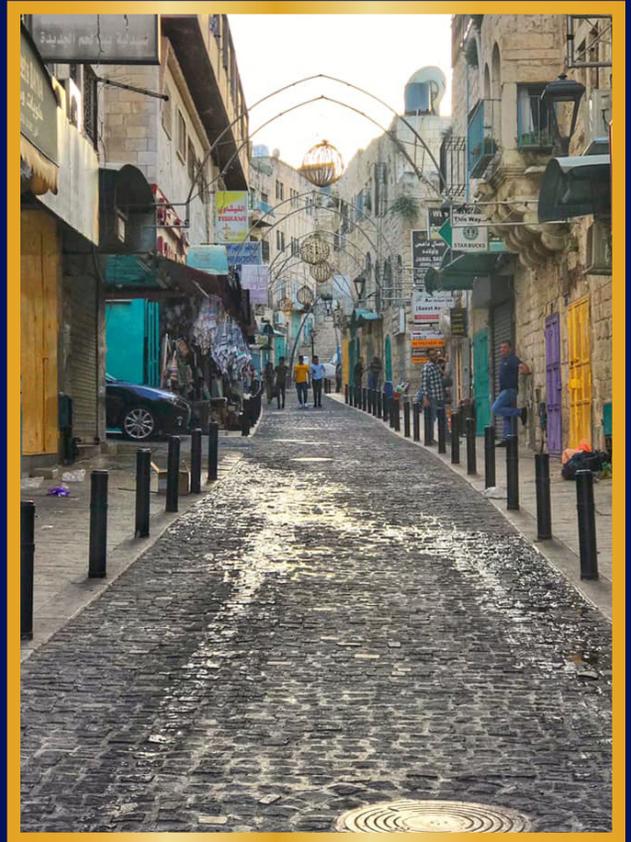
- 1) strengthen or support physically or mentally,
- 2) undergo or suffer (something unpleasant),
- 3) cause to continue or be prolonged for an extended period or without interruption,
- 4) uphold, affirm or confirm the justice or validity of.

Throughout this year we have experienced each and every one of these definitions, the suffering, the prolonged time, the strengthening and support, and finally, the affirmation and confirmation of our validity and justice.

The Coronavirus pandemic began in Palestine on March 5, 2020, when with the first reported cases of Covid-19, the Palestinian Authority acted swiftly and decisively, closing schools, colleges, churches, mosques, and eventually everything but essential businesses. All of our College operations had to shift to a work-from-home model, including all classes. All of our students finished their semester's studies online. The city of Bethlehem was under lockdown because of the Coronavirus for nearly 100 days, and streets were vacant. Faculty, staff, and alumni alike suffered from the virus.

Most stories you read about 2020 will depict what was lost due to Coronavirus, but our story includes not only what was lost, but also what was gained. Our greatest success throughout this challenging year was the nearly seamless transition of all of our classes to an online format. We were quite fortunate that we had in place the infrastructure for online education (due to our Online Biblical Studies Program), as well as having trained our instructors in e-learning techniques in preparation for that program. Because the College was closed, our 4th year students, who were working on their graduation seminar projects, could not use the library or have one-on-one meetings with their supervisors in person. Yet they managed to complete the year with the help of our faculty members. Seven of our BA students finished their seminar projects and presented them on campus under strict health protection procedures.

One positive result of the Coronavirus lockdown is that some of our faculty members decided to offer free online (Zoom) courses for the general public. There was great





enthusiasm for these new classes and we had over 120 students enrolled. The courses included Early Childhood Parenting and Counseling, Palestinian Theology, and Church History. These courses provided a much-needed “virtual” community during the lockdown. Also on the positive side, we have the largest number of incoming students in many years. This is due to the very high unemployment rate in Bethlehem (at least 60% of Bethlehem’s economy relies on tourism). Many students who already have degrees are returning to take advantage of the opportunity of learning more about their faith.

We invested time during the Coronavirus pandemic for the benefit of the College. Throughout 2020 we have been working with BethBC stakeholders on a strategic plan for the next five years. This process is nearing completion and will provide us with a roadmap for the next season of the College. We are also working on renovating our Guest House - expanding our capacity from 27 guests to 80 guests, tripling our potential annual income. This income generating project will decrease our dependence on foreign contributions for sustaining College programs.

Apart from our humanitarian relief program (The Shepherd Society) all of our student outreach programs were cancelled. These outreach programs – which normally consist of refugee assistance, ministry to marginalized people in the Bethlehem community, and ministry in churches - help our students integrate their academic studies with “real life,” offering opportunities for them to envision future ministries and job opportunities.

Unfortunately, due to the lockdown, our Christ at the Checkpoint Conference had to be postponed until June 2021. However, the committee was able to organize two webinars for international participants, and several other webinars for those in the Young Adult track.

The Shepherd Society, on the other hand, was inundated for requests. Many Palestinians who had been in stable financial situations lost their jobs, whether because the tourism industry (which employs approximately 60% of Bethlehem workers) completely shut down, or because the border crossing into Israel was closed to workers during the lockdowns. Requests have increased for basic supplies (food) as well as medical assistance.

One unique challenge we faced was the loss of our local income, up to 30% of our total revenue, which is primarily based on tourism through our Guest House and Star Bazaar Gift Shop. The Star Bazaar still has some sales online, and is focusing on updating their digital marketing capabilities. We have been very fortunate that special gifts from our dedicated supporters have made up what was lacking, so our budget for the year has been met.

All in all, 2020 was a year of extraordinary challenges, for Bethlehem Bible College and for the whole world, but God's faithfulness continues to sustain us – strengthen and support us, uphold and affirm our validity - just as He has for the last 40 years of the College's existence.



HERE IS SOME OF WHAT WE ACCOMPLISHED DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

1

We smoothly transitioned our courses online and offered new online language courses, such as Arabic for Internationals, Spanish, and Hebrew.

We offered three online ZOOM courses for the community in parenting and theology.

2

3

The College was able to pay the full salaries for its staff and faculty members.

The College did not have to lay off any staff or faculty.

4

5

We had the highest number of new students in years.

The Shepherd Society, "the helping hand of the College," helped hundreds of people who lost their jobs and were affected directly by the pandemic.

6

Bethlehem Bible College Programs

For our 2020 Annual Report we want to focus on the impact that the College is having on the lives of those who study here and participate in our outreach programs. For each segment we will share a testimony of a student or beneficiary, or a description of the overall program. We invite you to rejoice with us at the faithfulness of God through each of these ministries.

MA Program in Christian Leadership and Ministry



Merna, one of 20 students in our MA program, joined BethBC in order to strengthen her role in serving in the community. She started serving primarily with children, youth and women, and decided to enroll in the Master's program in Christian Ministry and Leadership in order to further develop her ministry. The more she studies, the more she understands the mission (and challenges) of a Christian believer in Palestinian society, especially in practical service. Merna is part of A Pot in His Hand (women's ministry of BethBC) and wants to serve in the field of Christian ministry as a woman who teaches and empowers other women to pursue their talents and giftings. She says, "I pray that the power of God would work through me in order to strengthen the leading roles of women." Merna continues to pray for influence and the ability to serve and encourage those around her in the ways of the Lord.

BA Program in Biblical Studies and Christian Education

We have 68 students in our BA Program. Here are testimonies from 2 students:

"As a mother and a housewife, studying through Zoom was challenging because, in order to focus on the lecture, I had to be free and ready. Yet I'm so grateful for this platform because through it students and faculty could meet together despite the hardships that were surrounding us. Through it we managed to finish all of our assignments, exams, and projects. Online courses gave me a challenge and determination to keep going and finish my final semester with great success." **(Suhad Lolos)**



"Studying online was a new experience for me. It was tough to focus during the online lectures, but I had no choice. I'm a 4th year student and I had to work on my seminar project during the quarantine. That was my biggest challenge because I needed to contact face-to-face with my teachers to understand well. I took it as a new challenge and new experience, and I made it through."

(Raneen Qumsieh)

Online Biblical Studies Diploma Program

Rani and Heidi are two of our 51 students in the Online Program. Here are their testimonies:

"I am Rani from Iraq, currently a student in the Online Biblical Studies Program. It was difficult for me to attend college in my country to learn, due to the poor security conditions and because of work pressure and concerns. The Lord guided me to study online at Bethlehem Bible College. Two years of studying have demonstrated qualified, specialized teachers with a comprehensive curriculum at a high academic level with excellent communication between students and teachers. These teachers strive hard with love to provide us with all psychological and moral support, through their guidance, prayers and encouragement. All of this helped me to better understand the word of God, to grow spiritually, to dedicate myself to Jesus, and to increase my trust in preaching the word of God."



"I am Heidi from Egypt residing in Italy. I am a wife and mother of 3 daughters. I found BethBC through my Internet research on a way to study the Bible in Arabic online. It was a new experience for me. I enrolled in the Online Diploma Program in Biblical Studies. This helps me to study the Bible in depth and understand the content of the Word of God. Studying enhances the spiritual maturity of students. Studying gives my day a new taste and meaning. I share with my children who encourage me when I feel I am not able to continue. My study at the College makes a difference in my practical and spiritual life, and will make the image of Jesus in me shine brighter. I encourage others to join this program and to learn, because you still have a chance."

Online Students Geographic Distribution

All of our students are Arabs, living in the following countries:



1- Canada	5	13- UK	2	25- Turkey	8
2- USA	1	14- Belgium	1	26- Syria	3
3- Brazil	1	15- Holland	1	27- U.A.E	1
4- Iraq	6	16- Sweden	23	28- Yemen	12
5- Jordan	3	17- Finland	3	29- Saudi Arabia	1
6- Palestine	34	18- Germany	11	30- Sudan	1
7- Egypt	13	19- Switzerland	1		
8- Lebanon	2	20- China	1		
9- Greece	1	21- North Korea	1		
10- Italy	1	22- Malaysia	1		
11- Algeria	1	23- New Zealand	1		
12- Morocco	1	24- Australia	3		

Gaza Students

Bethlehem Bible College's Study Centre in Gaza has continued to teach and encourage students during 2020, although due to Coronavirus courses have been taught on Zoom, rather than face-to-face. Six students are studying for the diploma and BA degree, two are finishing their MA degree, and two others were awarded their MA degree this year. Congratulations to these students for nearly five years of hard work under very difficult circumstances!

Marsail, from Gaza, studies in the MA Christian Leadership and Ministry Program online. She was involved in church activities, especially with young women and summer camps, and her church encouraged her to join Bethlehem Bible College. Gaza has scarcely any theological resources, but instructors sent recorded lectures and followed up with secure communication, encouraging her not to give up. These courses strengthened her connection to the Land, her faith, and the Word of God. After a time, due to the harsh conditions in Gaza, she was able to settle in Bethlehem to study. Her 3 teenage daughters are with her, but her husband remains in Gaza. Now she can pass along those things she is learning to her daughters.

Please pray for Marsail and all the other students who continue to study in Gaza.



Diploma Programs:

Tour Guide Program

Bethlehem is usually full of tourists from all over the world, but this summer the city was sad and silent due to the Coronavirus quarantine. The BethBC Tour Guide Department, under its Head, Haytham Dieck, made Bethlehem available to every home through a new course, "Discover Bethlehem." The purpose was to explore the world of Christ by discovering the Holy Land, starting from Bethlehem, its sights, stories, and how they relate to Christianity. The course focused on how the local people see and understand the story of Jesus, and to see how this tradition is embedded in the society of Bethlehem. Our students were pleased with these courses, especially the local context. One student explained, "Haytham is living what he is teaching, and that's the best performance ever."

In our regular Tour Guide Program we have been able to maintain our high standards, and the performance of our students has even increased. Classroom instruction was moved online, and our excursions around the West Bank have continued with a few extra projects, like "My Heritage My Identity" with the municipalities of Bethlehem and Grenoble, France (<https://www.facebook.com/BethlehemBibleCollege/posts/10158121928173583>). Feedback from our students about the quality of the program has been very high.





Hebrew Language Program

"My name is Hussam and I was born and raised in Bethlehem. I started my studies at Hebron University, then I was arrested. Later I finished my BA Degree in Education at Jerusalem Open University. I am married with 4 children, and I work as a teacher, teaching Islamic studies at the Al Nukhba School in Bethlehem. My school suggested adding another language (besides English), and I suggested Hebrew. (Since I was a prisoner in the Israeli prisons I know Hebrew.)

"I saw an advertisement of Bethlehem Bible College offering a diploma degree in Hebrew, and I was the first one to register. The college administration worked hard for the success of the program, especially during the Coronavirus pandemic. We were very thankful that we were able to continue the diploma online.

"We are nearly done with our diploma and graduation is coming soon. We give our appreciation and love to Bethlehem Bible College administration and teachers for what they have done with the program. I hope the program will continue because Hebrew is a very important language – it is the language of our neighbors."

Academic Development

Bethlehem Bible College is pleased to announce that two more of our faculty members have been accepted into doctoral programs and will be continuing their higher education overseas.

Daniel Bannoura, Lecturer of Islamic Studies and Comparative Religion, was accepted at the University of Notre Dame to pursue his doctorate in Redaction Criticism of the Qur'an. Daniel is native to Bethlehem and part of the "second generation" of BethBC teachers, following in the footsteps of his father who taught here in the 80's and 90's.

Yousef Al Khoury, Lecturer of Biblical Studies and Missions, will be continuing his doctorate in Contextual Biblical Interpretation at Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam. His thesis will be "A Palestinian Reading of the Kingdom of God in the Context of Israeli Occupation." Yousef is originally from Gaza, and his presence has been a blessing here at the College.

In addition to Daniel and Yousef, BethBC is supporting three other faculty and former staff to obtain their PhD: Anton and Sara Deik are studying at the University of Aberdeen from their home in Cochabamba, Bolivia, and Grace Zoughbi Arteen is studying at the London School of Theology.

We are very proud of our faculty members and their academic achievements. Please join us in praying for them as they take these challenging steps toward their future. We pray that they will achieve insight in their topics of study and that they will be a benefit both to our community and the larger Body of Christ. And especially, we pray that after they finish their studies, they will all be able to return to serve our people here in Palestine.



Christ at the Checkpoint Conference



The 6th Christ at the Checkpoint Conference was scheduled to take place in June 2020. Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the conference was postponed to June 2021. In its place we did two webinars. The first one, "Bethlehem-Jerusalem-Nazareth: Hope and Resilience in Difficult Times," featured three young, emerging Palestinian Christian leaders from these cities. They focused on three important themes that are facing the Palestinian community these days and offered a distinct Christian response to these challenges: Israel's annexation plan, the nation-state law in Israel, and the theology of the land. Yet the overall theme was that of hope; manifested in how faith in Jesus Christ empowered these young leaders to face the challenges and live in hope.

The second webinar, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere," featured a very important conversation between African American and Palestinian Christian theologians. The keynote speaker was the renowned African American theologian Willie (William) Jennings. The webinar considered ways the two communities respond to discrimination, especially when this takes place in the name of religion. This was a groundbreaking webinar in that it brought the two communities together in conversation.

The two webinars were well attended; each had more than 300 participants and were watched thousands of times later in our social media outlets. It is of great significance to introduce new emerging voices in our context. As a result of the second webinar, a group is forming between African American and Palestinian Christian theologians to follow up on how to engage in a deeper level with one another.

Bethlehem Bible College Outreach and Development Center

Shepherd Society

Medical Project: 600 individuals
Food Relief Project: 1 500 families

Each one of these individuals and families who have received medical and food aid have their own story. Here is a story of one of our beneficiaries from the medical project:



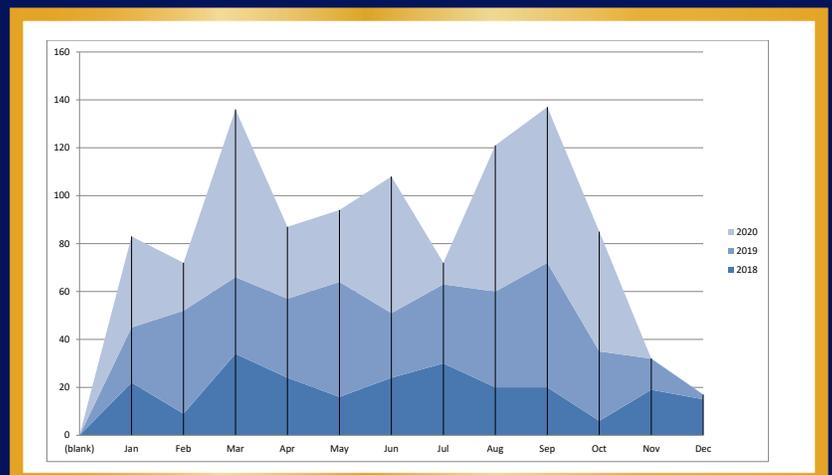
Ammar and Nahida live in Beit Sahour, just beside Bethlehem. They have three sons and two daughters. The father, Ammar, suffers from many chronic diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and cardiac problems. Ammar's doctor asked him to stop working due to his health issues. Nahida, his wife, works as a housekeeper, but their income is very low.

During Coronavirus this family, along with so many others, are suffering even more since they can't move easily and Nahida cannot work often. We've been standing beside this family and other needy families by supporting them with their medical needs. One example is Ammar's heart catheterization operation expenses, medication, and health insurance. In addition, we visit all our beneficiaries at their home to maintain this good relationship. Besides giving them food packages during the year, especially at Christmas and Easter times, we pray with them, or just be an ear to listen.

Ammar says about the Shepherd Society:

***"The Shepherd Society has added so much to our lives;
they have helped us a lot"***

Shepherd Society
Increasing number
of beneficiaries
2018 - 2020



A Pot in His Hand

A Pot in His Hand held their last large in-person gathering was in February for Valentine's Day to celebrate love. Since that time all major gatherings have been cancelled and the entire dynamic of the ministry has been changed. We have had to be much more active and creative in our outreach and ministry.

We started with a series of 6 Zoom workshops on Raising Children During



Hard Times. From there, other weekly videos are being recorded dealing with topics such as: raising teenagers during the Coronavirus, managing life as a single woman, adopting new habits during Covid-19, coping with change and growing emotionally, controlling our thoughts, and flexibility during crises. Other digital outreaches include our e-magazine available on the BethBC website, and a new website called "A Pot in His Hand" (<https://aniyabiyadihi.org>). (Content is currently being developed for the new website.) Mentoring and spiritual formation is still taking place one-on-one. Dr. Madleine Sara is training a team of seven members, and takes personal responsibility for mentoring 15 ladies.

New Vision Media Center

One of the projects of our New Vision Media Center (NVMC) is a broadcast called "New Vision." This program has the aim of creating a platform for the voiceless in the Palestinian society. The program will promote democracy and human rights through media and training.

"New Vision" is a 10-minute program that tackles the most important issues and problems facing the Palestinian community and will be broadcast online using different social media platforms like YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and websites.

An example of the stories "New Vision" is highlighting is the following: A group of persons with disabilities is holding a sit-in (called "A Movement Toward a Dignified Life for Persons with Disabilities") at the Palestinian Legislative Council. They are demanding the ministers enact a free, equitable, and inclusive governmental health insurance system for all persons with disabilities, through which they can obtain health, medical, and rehabilitative services with dignity.

The NVMC team heard about this movement and went to Ramallah to film and interview the leadership team in order for their voices to be heard through NVMC networks. This is one of the many stories that will be highlighted to give a platform for others to have their voices heard.



Community Training

Despite Coronavirus and quarantines around the globe, the Community Training department of BethBC was able to offer many different courses to our neighbors and other interested students around the world. Most of these courses dealt with languages – English, Spanish, and Arabic – and served over 200 students. The Arabic courses started with 30 students learning colloquial Arabic. Altogether we held three Level 1 courses and one Level 2 course.

Mrs. Claude Juha, Head of Community Training Department says, “We started with only one course, but due to the high demand, we opened another one. Most of our students are friends of the College or have visited us at least once, so this is an opportunity to keep in touch with them. Most of our visitors cannot travel to visit us here in Bethlehem, so we thought it would be a great idea to keep them connected with the College by learning Arabic.”

Star Bazaar Gift Shop

The main mission of our gift shop, the Star Bazaar, is to supplement College revenue locally, through visiting tourists. Coronavirus hit tourism very hard in Bethlehem, in fact, the income of the Star Bazaar has decreased by 90%. Thanks to our creative manager, Anita, the staff has begun focusing on digital marketing to encourage online orders from around the world.

The Star Bazaar supports fair trade. Anita explains: "When you push the prices down, you cannot expect the people living in the margin to survive. If we have the mission to support struggling people, how can it be fair to push the prices down? Fair trade makes sure that we are paying them a reasonable price for their products, as well as ensure that they can work in a very healthy environment."

The Star Bazaar is unique because of the focus on the vendors that are sitting on the margins and do not have much exposure to other jobs, simply because other retailers don't pay them a fair price. With them, we have developed many new products that you cannot find in any other shop. We encourage our vendors to think out of the box and bring new items into the world of tourism.



A Word from Our College President

Reflecting on the past year and even the past 8+ years as I have served as the President and CEO of Bethlehem Bible College, I can't count the lessons I have learned. Two main lessons should be highlighted as we finish this year: the first is God's faithfulness. God has been faithful to us as a college and has been faithful to our people the Palestinians. Our very existence and the existence of a Christian witness of churches and ministries serving here is proof of God's faithfulness to us. It's really amazing, God loves the Palestinian people! We serve a faithful God, "Who keeps his covenant for a thousand generations and lavishes his unfailing love on those who love him and obey his commands" (Deuteronomy 7:9).

Secondly, I have learned leadership and servanthood. The experience of serving in this community that has been going through decades of hardships and suffering is potent, especially learning from the beautiful witness of endurance and resilience that my faculty, staff, and students have demonstrated in our country. They really are a light in our country and in the world. When you live and serve between a rock and hard place, yes, it's not easy, but the lessons learned are eternal.

All glory goes to God for his faithfulness and love towards us and towards our people the Palestinians

Rev. Dr. Jack Sara
President of Bethlehem Bible College



A Word from Our Board of Trustees

This year of 2020 has been a challenge but at the same time a blessing. I have been pondering on the theme of "Finding Hope while Counting Your Blessings." There are so many great things that happen in our lives that we take for granted. God is God, and this year despite the situation

Bethlehem Bible College stayed strong, with more students and stronger ministry. We count our blessings - people like you who bless us with prayers, support, love, and passion. If all of us just take a moment each day to reflect on what the Lord is doing in our lives, we will find so much hope, because He is an awesome God.

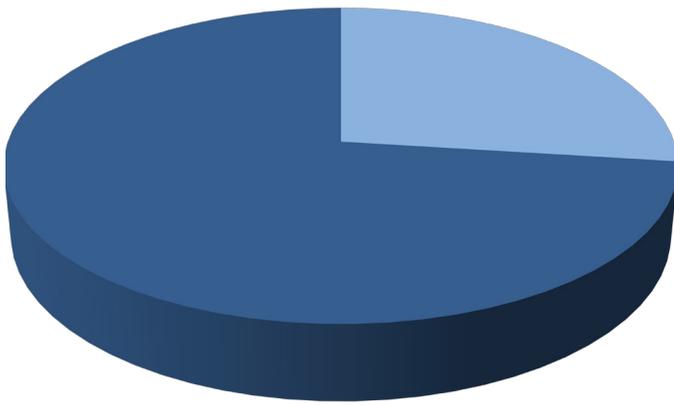
Tanas Alqassis

Chairman of the Board of Trustees



Financial Overview 2020

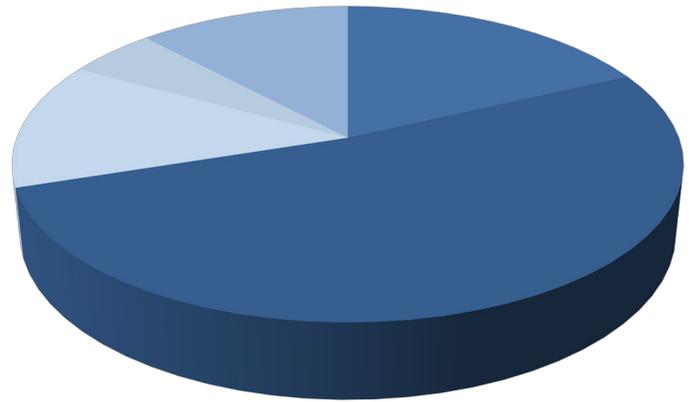
Source of Funds



- Revenues from Activities (27%)
- Contribution (73%)

\$1,649,905
Total Income

Functional Expenses



- Salaries & Staff Benefits (52%)
- Admin & General Expenses (18%)
- Program Expenses (13%)
- Depreciation (12%)
- Cost of Goods Sold (5%)

\$1,616,540
Total Expenses

Bethlehem Bible College's source of funding is mainly from foreign contributions (68% USA, 26% other international). Local income (6%) has decreased by 30% compared to 2019 due to Covid-19. Income generated from the Star Bazaar Gift Shop, the Guest House, tours, conferences, and outreach has been negatively affected by the pandemic. Foreign contributions have also decreased by 8.5% compared to 2019, and expenses decreased by 10% from 2019.

Summary Financial Statement

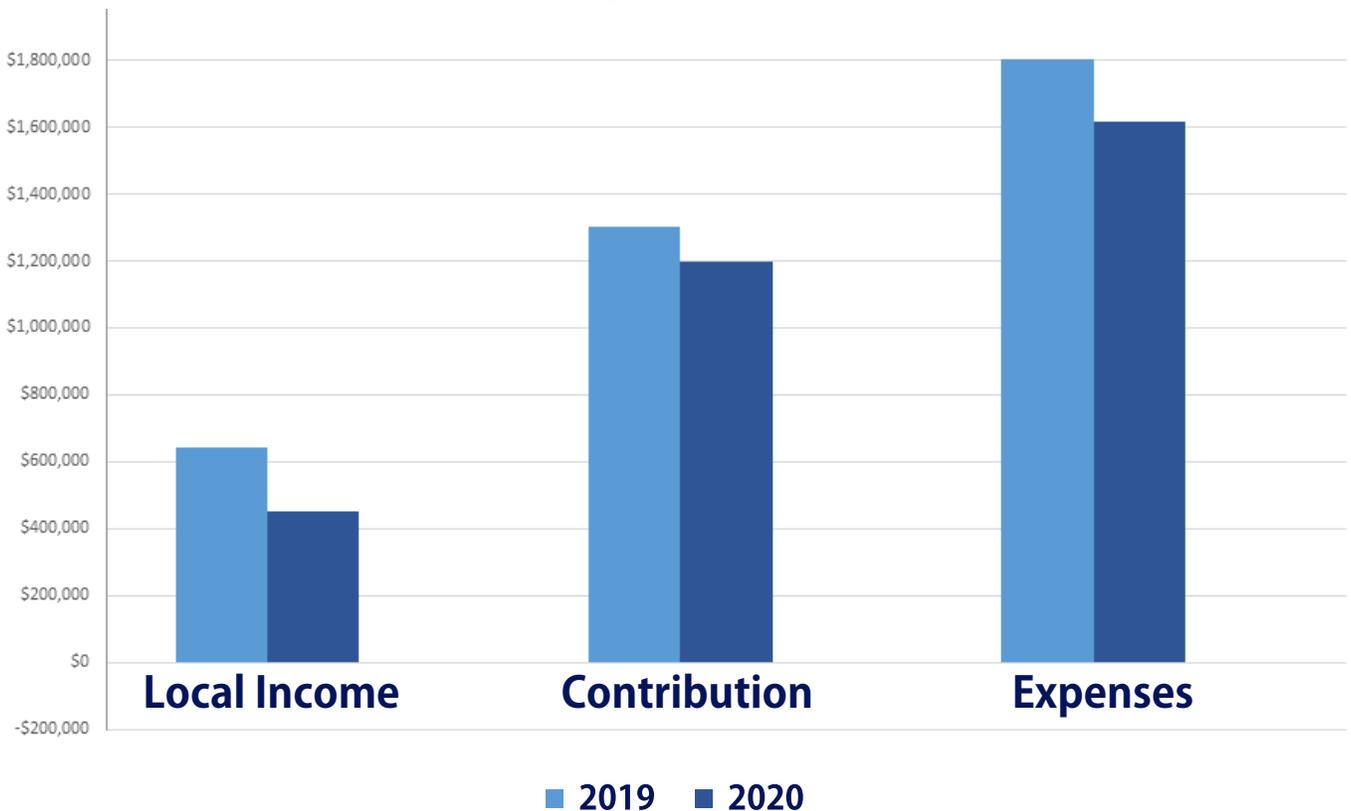
Statement of Financial Position 2020

Assets	\$ 5,381,007
Liabilities	1,175,148
Net Assets	4,205,859
Total Liabilities & Net Assets	\$ 5,381,007

Statement of Activities 2020

Income	\$ 1,649,905
Expense	1,616,540
Net Income	\$ 33,366

Income and Expense Comparison



- Please note that this information is based on unaudited financial statements, any variations will be noted in the 2020 audit report.

Thank You

So much was accomplished in 2020 despite the Coronavirus pandemic and all the associated hardships. Our hope is that through this report you can see the impact that Bethlehem Bible College has had on all of our beneficiaries, including students, faculty, staff, clients, and even our society. This worldwide impact is made possible by YOU – our faithful partners who support us financially, in prayer, and with your encouragement. Our story through the last 40 years continues to be unswerving, a story of the goodness of God, and the faithfulness of His people to be a light in our country, and around the world.

