

St. Nicholas made a surprise visit from the Middle East to General Convention on Wednesday, July 15.

He encouraged all to give a “bag of gold” for a child in need in the Holy Land through the American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem on December 6, St. Nicholas Day.

St. Nicholas, patron saint of children in need, was bishop in what is now Turkey in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. His devotion to the poor, the sick and those needing protection is legendary – a model of faith in action.

AFEDJ will connect St. Nicholas’ legacy with the overwhelming need among the children in the Holy Land during Advent. As we seek more authentic ways to celebrate the holiday season, we might follow St. Nicholas’ example. Among his many good works, it’s said he rescued three young girls from a life of slavery by providing each with a bag of gold to purchase her freedom. Thus the tradition of the three bags of gold.

To prepare for the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, AFEDJ will provide tools and ideas to help parishes bring the spirit of St. Nicholas into our hearts and communities. Crafts, Prayers of the People and music, a pageant and educational materials for children and adults will be available to any group requesting them. These activities prepare the way for an ingathering to provide scholarships and healthcare to those who struggle daily in the land of Jesus’ birth. That “gold” will change a life and help sustain the small Christian community in the Holy Land.

Anne Lynn, Director of AFEDJ stated, “We hear from so many families that are looking for a way to address the commercialism of Christmas. American Friends wanted to offer a way to improve the life of a modern day child in the Middle East in a way that fit the season and that everyone could participation in with his or her own ‘bag of gold.’ It could change the way we celebrate the holidays and it’s guaranteed to change the life of a child in the Holy Land. Celebrate with us on December 6.”

December 6, 2009 is St. Nicholas Day

Request information about how you can participate from AFEDJ by writing The Rev. Deborah Dresser at [deborahdresser@gmail.com](mailto:deborahdresser@gmail.com) or Anne Lynn at [aklynn@afedj.org](mailto:aklynn@afedj.org). Put the date on your parish calendar and join parishes across the country in celebrating the holiday season in a substantive and truly holy way. Outreach Committees, ECW, Confirmation classes and church school classes, anyone with enthusiasm and a sense of fun can find resources and support from AFEDJ.

AFEDJ is proud of its Missioners, a group of 190 clergy and lay people committed to educate about the situation, the issues and the need in the land called holy by the three Abrahamic faiths. AFEDJ Missioners in your parish or Diocese can provide more information about St. Nicholas Day and about the work of the Diocese of Jerusalem. A list of Missioners can be found on our website at [www.afedj.org](http://www.afedj.org). For information on becoming a Missioner, contact The Rev. Charles Cloughen Jr. at [frcharles@afedj.org](mailto:frcharles@afedj.org).

Children in the Holy Land could rely on St. Nicholas then. They need each of us to be there for them today.

We are blessed with the commitment and talent of Canon James Rosenthal, Director of the St. Nicholas Society, who embodies the spirit and occasionally the persona of St. Nicholas. His extensive body of work and prayer can be found at [www.stnicholassociety.com](http://www.stnicholassociety.com).

AFEDJ is an independent non-political, non-profit organization dedicated to support for the institutions of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem. These include 13 schools, 2 hospitals, a full service clinic and four institutes for the blind, the deaf and the physically and mentally disabled. Your tax-deductible support is needed for their hope and survival as a Christian community. For more information, go to [www.afedj.org](http://www.afedj.org).

CONTACT: Anne Lynn, Director, AFEDJ, [aklynn@afedj.org](mailto:aklynn@afedj.org) or 203-655-3575.