

“Delivering Hope in Times of Conflict: Holy Family Hospital, Bethlehem”



The Harvard Club of Boston
May 12, 2025

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Moderator

The Hon. Marianne B. Bowler

Born in Boston, Massachusetts, the Hon. Marianne B. Bowler received her BA in pre-med from Regis College and her JD cum laude from Suffolk Law School. Prior to attending law school, she was a research assistant in biochemistry at Harvard Medical School and a medical and scientific journalist. Her articles appeared in numerous newspapers and magazines.

Following a distinguished career in the office of the United States Attorney for the District of Massachusetts and the Department of Justice in Washington, DC, Judge Bowler was appointed to the United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts as a magistrate judge, a position which she has held since 1990. Since 2002, Judge Bowler's additional judicial duties have included serving as a mediator as part of the Alternative Dispute Resolution Program of the United States District Court. She has conducted over 500 mediations in the Districts of Massachusetts, Puerto Rico and Rhode Island involving a wide range of subject areas, resulting in hundreds of millions of dollars in settlements with an average annual settlement rate in excess of 80 percent.

Judge Bowler served as chief magistrate judge from 2002 to 2005 and as an observer member to the Judicial Council of the First Circuit. She recently concluded two terms as a member of the International Judicial Relations Committee of the Judicial Conference of the United States. Active in the intellectual property community, Judge Bowler is president of the Boston Intellectual Property Inn of Court and was a co-founding president of Boston College Inn of Court for Intellectual Property in 1997. She was also the first woman president of the Suffolk Law School Alumni Association and the first woman to chair the board of the New England Baptist Hospital.

Judge Bowler is married to Marc Pfeffer, MD, Dzaui Professor of Medicine, Harvard Medical School. Known to friends as “Mimi”, she enjoys extensive international traveling, is conversant in French, German and Italian, and is an accomplished artist specializing in faux finishes and trompe l’oeil painting.

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Panelist

The Hon. Michèle B. Bowe

Born in Norfolk, Virginia, the Hon. Michèle B. Bowe lived outside the United States for her early life, including many years in Amman, Jordan. She is a graduate of Georgetown University School of Foreign Service and Georgetown University, Masters of Arab Studies, and speaks Arabic, French and Spanish in addition to her native English. After graduation, Michèle worked as an economist, specializing in the Jordan River Valley region.

Ambassador Bowe has held significant leadership positions within the Sovereign Order of Malta, including as hospitaller for the Federal Association and as regional hospitaller. She is an immediate past member of the board of the Federal Association and a current member of the Lourdes Committee. She has served on the boards of the Order's Fund for Forgotten People, Malteser International, Catholic Charities - Archdiocese of Washington, the San Miguel School and the Jesuit Refugee Services.

In 2013, Ambassador Bowe was elected to serve as the president of Holy Family Hospital of Bethlehem Foundation, which the Order stewards. She is one of two Foundation directors who also serve on the Hospital's international board of directors.

Two years after Ambassador Bowe was appointed as the minister counsellor to the Representative Office of the Order of Malta in Ramallah, she was named Ambassador from the Order to Palestine. She has been honored with the James Cardinal Hickey Award, the Archdiocese of Washington Manifesting the Kingdom Award, the Star of Bethlehem award, the Pro Merito Melitensi with Crown medal and the Pro Merito Melitensi with Plaque medal. She served as the keynote speaker for the International Strategic Conference in Rhodes for the Order and is a frequent guest speaker on national and international news programs on topics relating to the Order, the Hospital, vocation to marriage, life in Palestine, Christians in the Holy Land, and humanitarian diplomacy.

In her spare time, you will find Michèle in her garden at home, skiing with her family, or tending the ancient olive grove of the Order of Malta in Jerusalem.

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Panelist

Michael M. Espiritu, MD

Dr. Michael M. Espiritu has served as a visiting professor at Holy Family Hospital and has travelled to Bethlehem five times in this capacity. A member of the Sovereign Order of Malta, Dr. Espiritu serves as counsellor at the Permanent Observer Mission of the Order to the United Nations.

After receiving his AB in psychology from Harvard College, Dr. Espiritu earned his MD from Weill Cornell Medical College. Following graduation, he completed his residency in pediatrics and fellowship in neonatal-perinatal medicine at New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center. He is board certified in pediatrics and in neonatal-perinatal medicine.

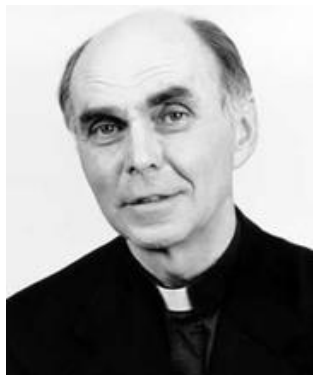
Currently, Dr. Espiritu serves as assistant professor of clinical pediatrics in the Division of Neonatology at Weill Cornell Medical College and assistant attending pediatrician at New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell and the New York-Presbyterian Alexandra Cohen Hospital for Women and Newborns. Prior to joining the faculty of Weill Cornell, Dr. Espiritu was assistant professor of pediatrics at NYU School of Medicine; he also served as the associate program director of its Neonatal-Perinatal Medicine Fellowship and as attending neonatologist at NYU Langone Medical Center and Bellevue Hospital Center.

Dr. Espiritu's academic interests are wide-ranging and inform his professional endeavors. His research includes, among other things, issues surrounding patient safety in the NICU, physician bias in counseling at extreme prematurity, disaster preparedness in the NICU, and neonatal global health.

Earlier this year, the City Council and Mayor of the City of New York appointed Dr. Espiritu to the board of directors of the New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation, which oversees the nation's largest municipal hospital system. This system, comprised of 11 hospitals, 5 post-acute care centers, and 70 community health centers, serves 1,100,000 patients annually.

In 2023, Pope Francis named Michael a Knight of Saint Sylvester for his service to the Church.

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Panelist

Rev. J. Bryan Hehir

A priest, theologian, and scholar, Rev. J. Bryan Hehir has served at Harvard University as the Parker Gilbert Montgomery Professor of the Practice of Religion and Public Life, Kennedy School of Government, until recently. He had previously served on the faculty of Harvard Divinity School as Professor of the Practice in Religion and Society and served as Interim Dean and Dean of the School. His teaching and writing have focused on issues of ethics and foreign policy, Catholic social ethics and the role of religion in world politics and in American Society.

Father Bryan has led Catholic Charities USA, the national network of Charities in the United States, as its president and chief executive officer, and now serves as secretary for health and social services in the Archdiocese of Boston. In addition to Harvard faculty positions, Father Bryan has served at Georgetown University on its School of Foreign Service and Kennedy Institute of Ethics faculties. He also addressed issues of foreign and domestic policy for the Church in the United States as a staff member of the U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops.

Father Bryan is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the American Philosophical Society, and the Council on Foreign Relations. He has served on the board of the Arms Control Association, the Global Development Committee and the Independent Sector.

A MacArthur Fellow, Father Bryan is the recipient of over thirty honorary degrees from American colleges and universities. He has been bestowed the Laetare Award of the University of Notre Dame.

Father Bryan took his AB and Master of Divinity degrees at Saint John's Seminary and his Doctor of Theology at Harvard Divinity School.

Publications include: “The Moral Measurement of War: A Tradition of Continuity and Change”; “Military Intervention and National Sovereignty”; “Catholicism and Democracy”; “Social Values and Public Policy: A Contribution from a Religious Tradition”; and “The Moral Dimension in the Use of Force”.

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Panelist

Harry W. Johnson, Jr., MD, FACOG, FACS

Dr. Harry W. Johnson, Jr. serves as president of the international medical committee of Holy Family Hospital and as a member of the Hospital's international board of trustees.

After receiving his MD from the Wake Forest University School of Medicine, Dr. Johnson completed his residency at the University of Maryland Medical Center and fellowship in obstetrics and gynecology at the Greater Baltimore Medical Center. He is board certified in obstetrics and gynecology and in urogynecology and pelvic reconstructive surgery.

A leading ob/gyn, urogynecologist and female pelvic medicine and pelvic reconstruction surgeon, Dr. Johnson serves as director of urogynecology and pelvic reconstruction at the University of Maryland Medical System. He has extensive training and skill in gynecology and urology, including endoscopic and open surgery, and in treating ailments of the reproductive system and related bowel, bladder, and urinary systems, as well as in managing pregnancy and child birthing.

For Father's Day 2024, a CBS News affiliate profiled Dr. Johnson and his daughter, Molly Johnson, MD, also in the field of obstetrics and gynecology. The specialty has run in their family for three generations, as Harry's father also served as an obstetrician and gynecologist.

"To think that your child wants to do what you do and then wants to train with you -- I don't think there can be anything more satisfying to a parent," commented Harry. To his daughter, Dr. H. Johnson "is really patient as he helps you learn different techniques. Calm and cool, collected, and pretty unflappable. I think that just comes from all the experience he has had. . .It's been an absolute honor and highlight of my career to get to learn from him and work with him, and I feel so incredibly lucky." It is clear that her father's other colleagues and patients, from Baltimore to Bethlehem, share this view.

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About Holy Family Hospital of Bethlehem

Holy Family Hospital of Bethlehem is a Catholic teaching hospital with a state-of-the-art maternity and neonatal critical care center, Holy Family Hospital serves women, infants, and children throughout the Holy Land. The main hospital facility and its Mobile Outreach Clinic provide quality medical care to all, regardless of religion, ethnicity, or ability to pay.

The roots of the Hospital date back a century and a half. In 1985, Pope Saint John Paul II asked the Order of Malta to begin stewarding the Hospital. The Hospital has an international board of trustees, including panelists Ambassador Bowe and Dr. Johnson. The Order, which is neutral and apolitical, fully reopened the Hospital's doors in 1990. Two years ago, on the Feast of the Epiphany, the 100,000th infant was born.

Holy Family Hospital stands as a beacon of hope for impoverished and at-risk families in the Bethlehem region and remote desert communities. Bethlehem has no governmental social safety net, and, for the past several years, Bethlehem has had virtually no pilgrimage activity or tourism. As a result, 90% of the workforce remains without income.

By the numbers

Holy Family Hospital Staffing and Budget

With a staff of 220, 71% of whom are women, the Hospital serves a catchment area of 1,000,000 individuals. Its annual budget is \$5,500,000 plus \$500,000 for equipment needs, and it is audited annually by Deloitte.

Providing Care to All in Need

No patients are ever turned away. Normally, all services are 50% subsidized and social workers help those in greatest financial need with sliding scale payments or free care. In this time of conflicts in the Gaza Strip, however, the Hospital is subsidizing deliveries and services by up to 85%. The Mobile Outreach Clinic as well as the Gestational Diabetes Clinic and Well Woman Clinic remain free of charge.

From 2023 to 2024: the Hospital experienced a 22% increase in the incidence of premature births, a 113% increase in the number of infants staying more than 50 days in the NICU, and a 56% increase in the rate of infants born especially small. There was a decrease in services of the Mobile Outreach Clinic due to hostilities, additional checkpoints and roadblocks.

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Providing Care to All in Need (*continued*)

In 2024: **3,902** infants delivered, including **920** cesarean sections; **153,000** medical services were provided; and **393** additional operations. The level IV neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) served **525** premature and critically ill infants. **990** women received well woman visits, and the Gestational Diabetes Clinic served **1,562** women. Medical teams ventured out to remote desert communities via the Mobile Outreach Clinic to provide vital obstetric, gynecologic, and pediatric care for **1,602** women and **1,301** infants and children. A total of **13** medical residents and **225** nurses and midwives received advanced medical education at the Hospital.

The Hospital's Facilities

The Hospital has **18** NICU beds, **two** ICU beds for pre- or post-partum women, **seven** private delivery rooms, **50** pre- or post-natal beds, and **three** operating rooms. It is the only hospital in the region that can deliver and care for infants born before 34 weeks. Capital improvements are under construction to provide **two** new operating theaters, a **four**-bed recovery room, several new teaching, conference and admin facilities, **one** dedicated equipment and supply sterilization facility, **one** workshop for the bio-medical engineer, **four** overnight rooms for visiting physicians, medical residents, and families of premature infants from remote communities, as well as **one** cafeteria and **one** family waiting room.

The Mobile Outreach Clinic currently has one state-of-the-art van that accommodates four-member teams and withstands extreme temperatures.

The Holy Family Hospital of Bethlehem Foundation

To help support the inspiring work of Holy Family Hospital, the Holy Family Hospital Foundation was founded in 1997 (EIN 52-2050117). The Hon. Michèle Bowe serves as president and Ms. Kate Robinson as executive director.



Holy Family Hospital of Bethlehem Foundation
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