



Issue 36 -Spring 2005

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FAITH IN ACTION

Easter in Palestine and else where among Christians of the Middle East is called “The Big Feast” and indeed it is. However, it is sad to observe how in recent years Easter celebrations have been dampened by severe restrictions to people’s movements, and their age-old tradition of preparing for the big feast; observing Lent, walking the way of the Cross, celebrating Palm Sunday, the sharing and passing on of the Holy Fire. Nevertheless, the feast of the Resurrection never fails to rekindle hope in the hearts of the little flock, that their long and dark Good Friday under occupation will soon lead to the resurrection of life in all its fullness for all the people of the region. Palm Sunday is one of the highlights on the way to the Resurrection. In this issue Canon Naim Ateek leads us into new insights about the meaning of the events of Palm Sunday.



Faith in Action has, for some time now, been demonstrated in an innovative way through a World Council of Churches program known as the Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI). Read about some of their experiences inside. A lot of other action has also been taking place in the region, some of it faithful and some faithless. Samia Khoury will bring us up to date about the more important political events going on.

Last but not least, a very pleasant surprise awaited us on the morning after our last Sabeel Board meeting on Feb. 23. After having been with Ms. Hind Khoury at the meeting, we woke up to the news that she had been appointed a Minister of State in the newly formed Palestinian cabinet. How we have faith in this action! Congratulations Hind.

In this Spring issue we are reminded that spring is a time of renewal, of rebirth, of God’s promise of a new day. We look to the Resurrection as a new beginning with new hope for the future, and a renewed sense of faith, a faith in a God of justice and peace. The staff and board of Sabeel would like to take this opportunity to send our Easter greetings to all of our friends and colleagues in hopes that they will feel the power of the Resurrection in their own lives, and be renewed and revived as they, too, put their faith in action.

Cedar Duaybis is a board member of Sabeel

BIBLICAL REFLECTION

PEACE MARCH ON JERUSALEM
LED BY JESUS

GUIDELINES TO NONVIOLENT STRUGGLE

Mark 11:1-10, 15-18

by Naim Ateek

This issue of Cornerstone is focusing on Faith in Action. This is an appropriate theme that is meant to challenge the complacency of many goodhearted people including many Christians who have faith but have not been able to translate it into concrete and effective action.

Since the first century of the rise of the Christian movement, there has been lively discussion on the relationship between faith and action. Some scholars believe that one of the objectives of the letter of James in the New Testament is to balance out the danger of misunderstanding Paul's emphasis on faith (see the letter to the Romans chapter four). Paul stressed the importance of faith regardless of works. Such an emphasis, it was felt, left the door open for people to sit comfortably at home satisfied with the faith they have without translating it into action. It was certainly a distortion of Paul's thoughts but it is a reflection of the human inclination to read what they wish to read that fits with their weakness and prejudice.

James takes issue with that and points out that faith without action is dead. He was careful to offset and adjust any misunderstanding about the comprehensiveness of faith. So James says, "So it is with faith: if it is alone and includes no actions, then it is dead.... Show me how anyone can have faith without actions. I will show you my faith by my action" (James 2:17 & 18b). The Christian

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needs both. In fact any person of faith needs both. Without undermining, in any way, those who are called to a contemplative and cloistered way of life, for most people of faith, those who are called to live in the world, we must not separate faith from action. In fact the test of true faith is proven in and through our action in the service of others.

Since we are still in the Easter season, I would like to focus our attention on the story of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem just

before his passion and death. I am using this as an important analogy for the way we, as people of faith, must exercise our faith through action. It is important to remember, however, that an analogy is never perfect. It is merely a tool that can help us understand an important lesson.

The story of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and the cleansing of the temple are recorded in the four gospels. The gospel of John places the cleansing at the beginning of Jesus' ministry (chapter 2:13-16) while the others record it as an event at the end of his ministry and a few days before his death. The entry into Jerusalem has been generally referred to as the Triumphant Entry. Such a name is a misnomer because in many ways it contradicts the spirit of Jesus. It is possible that the word "triumphant" was attached to it because of the influence of the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 "Shout aloud, daughter of Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious...."

This episode in both of its phases, i.e. the entry into the city and the cleansing of the temple, can be seen as a model for the way a nonviolent action can take place. It can apply in so many various areas of life. In this specific case, it describes a march or a demonstration that combines faith and action. It is one way in which people of faith can express their witness for justice through a public demonstration.

THE TEXT

When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount

of Olives, he sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, "Why are you doing this?" just say this, "The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately." They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, some of the bystanders said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!" ...Then they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who sold doves; and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. He was teaching and saying, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations?' But you have made it a den of robbers" (Mark 11:1-10 & 15-17).

When reflecting on this text and its parallels in Matthew 21:1-17; Luke 19:28-46; John 2:13-22 & 12:12-19, a number of guidelines can be deduced. For the sake of brevity, I would like to mention the following:

1. Any act of nonviolent resistance demands courage no less, if not more, than the courage needed for an armed and violent struggle. Courage, however, is presumably preceded by faith. It is essential to have faith in the truth and jus-

tice of the cause one is championing. In fact, it is faith that gives courage, and courage that helps produce action. Jesus' faith and courage were exhibited in planning and implementing the Jerusalem march. Jesus' faith was in a God of justice who was concerned about the peace of Jerusalem as well as the purity

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and sincerity of worship in God's house. When Jesus saw the city from the Mount of Olives he wept and said, "If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes..." (Luke 19:42). The oppressive Roman occupation of the whole land and the growing violence of the militant revolutionaries were an omen of doom which Jesus could foresee. It made him predict destruction of the city because there was so much political and religious injustice and corruption. Similarly, the misuse of the temple made him realize that even before it would be physically destroyed it had been spiritually destroyed by the way it was abused. Faith and courage are necessary ingredients in nonviolent direct action.

2. Presumably the crowd that participated in the procession was composed of men, women, and children. The presence of women and children in demonstrations gives greater vitality and importance. The spontaneity and boldness of children contrast with the timidity and reluctance of adults. (Matthew 21:15 mentions the crying out of children.) It is important to train children in nonviolence. They can be receptive and more daring. Moreover, the presence of women and children indicates

the nonviolent intent of the demonstrations. Obviously, people do not wish any harm for their children. When their children and women are present then it is clear that they are taking a courageous stand on certain principles and are using the best democratic means available for them. It is important to remember that the government of Israel and its cronies accused the Palestinians of pushing their children to the streets during the first intifada so that they might be killed and then turn around and blame the Israeli army. Shockingly, some western people believed such nonsense. It is another one of those myths that the Israeli media disseminated against the Palestinians. The facts, however, are that the whole community - children and adults - rose up against the illegal Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. I believe that the presence of women and children is an asset in nonviolent direct action. The presence of women and children can put to shame the unnecessary savagery and brutality of the police and army against peaceful demonstrations.

3. Slogans are an important factor in the dissemination of the message. The four gospels mention several slogans. "Hosanna;" "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord;" "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David;" "Hosanna in the highest heaven;" "Hosanna to the Son of David;" "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven." It is most likely that Jesus did not endorse any fanatical nationalism nor did he wish to be called "king", but some people in the crowd and the enthusiastic disciples used such slogans. The point here is the importance of right and clear slogans. One of the slogans that appears in three out of the four Gospels is the word "Hosanna". It is the Greek form of the Aramaic/Hebrew "Hosha'na". Most of us understand it today as an acclamation



of praise. When people say, “Hosanna in the Highest,” it is like saying, “Glory to God in the highest.” The real and original meaning of the word, however, is “Save now”. It was a revolutionary cry. It is the cry of an oppressed people under occupation. It was calling attention to the fact that the present status quo is not acceptable. It was pointing to another more just and righteous kingdom. Judging by the spirit of the teachings of Jesus, he was probably thinking of the Kingdom of God. Yet, judging by the disciples’ natural inclination towards a military messianism and the enthusiasm of the common people for, similarly, a warrior-king, they were chanting about a repeat of David’s military kingdom. Slogans are important when they are clear and to the point like, “End the Occupation;” “Killing innocent people is a crime;” “Stop demol-

ishing homes;” etc. For people of faith, it is also possible to have slogans that emphasize God’s righteousness and justice. It is in the name of God that they march. Although we are citizens of different countries, we must not see nationalism as God-ordained. We must work for the kingdom of God that transcends any particular nationalism and points to a kingdom of justice and righteousness for all the people of the world. Its true metaphor is in saying that our citizenship is in heaven. This does not mean an abdication of the world. It means that our hearts and minds are set on higher and greater things. We should always feel the pull to the

heights, aspiring for everything that is truly human rather than the pull to the lower things that dehumanize people. Our cry to God must be constant, “O God save us now.” For ultimately, it is only in God that we can live in safety. As the old saying of faith goes in the Old Testament, “Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God” (Psalm 20:7).

4. Be ready for criticism. This is exhibited in the way the Pharisees asked Jesus to order his disciples to stop those inflammatory slogans (Luke 19:39) that could endanger the peace and quiet of the city and bring down the wrath of the Roman soldiers. Every time there is a nonviolent march, a demonstration, or a rally that takes place against a particular injustice, we find people who, on the one hand, support, commend, approve, and applaud it, and on the other hand, others who condemn, denounce, and disapprove of it. Indeed, when faithful people translate their faith into action, they are met with criticism and objections. Due to fear, many people recoil and refrain from any public activity. It takes great courage to withstand. Sometimes, the attack comes from both friend and foe. Jesus replied to the Pharisees, “I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.” Jesus’ words are a judgment on many people, especially those who are in positions of power and influence, who in the face of injustice, falsehood, and corruption, remain silent and unmoved. In such cases, the stones show more life to shout the truth

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than those who have become hard and calloused. If people can be trained from childhood to stand up for what is right, our world would have less injustice and oppression. Many Palestinians remember that during the first intifada many children confronted the Israeli army and its tanks with stones. The message of the stones reverberated throughout the world. In fact many people's conscience was aroused when they saw little children with a little stone standing defiantly before an Israeli tank. It is a message about truth and justice for an oppressed people.

When some of our churches in the West began to take the question of divestment seriously, the reaction came back swift and sharp. American Jewish Zionists and pro-Israel Jews and Christians went on the attack against those churches to rescind and revoke any action against Israel. The churches were considering the question of divestment from corporations that are doing business in Israel that benefit and support the occupation. It was a nonviolent approach to the conflict after many years of prodding their governments and the government of Israel to put a stop to the occupation and oppression of the Palestinians. This move started with the Presbyterian Church (PCUSA) and was followed by the Episcopal Church (ECUSA) that wanted to practice its faith through non-violent action. We believe in justice, therefore, we must do something about it. When we see the poor and the oppressed suffering, we must act. The well-known Latin American Liberation Theologian Leonardo Boff said, "If we want to serve the true God, we must break out of the circle of self-absorption and pay heed to the bloodied faces of our fellow human beings. If we do not share life with the oppressed, we do not share life with God."

5. The march must be peaceful and organized. There must be no violence. Our world, by and large, has not discovered the power of nonviolence. If we could spend a fraction of the monies

that the United States administration and other countries in the world are spending on the war in Iraq — the development of war technology, and the invention of lethal weapons of destruction — on the art of peacemaking and on creative peaceful methods for conflict resolutions, our world today would be in better shape and much closer to the achievement of peace in many areas.

Furthermore, careful organization is always necessary. People need to realize that we are up against principalities and powers. There are evil forces in this world that believe in the domination and oppression of others rather than in their freedom. Therefore, organization is necessary. Jesus must have been aware of the need for meticulous organization. He and the disciples determined the point of beginning and ending of the march - from the Mount of Olives to the temple. Reading the text gives the impression of a well-planned event: the timing of the event, the sending of the disciples to fetch the donkey, the instruction on what to say to the owner, where they all should meet and start the procession, etc. All this reflects careful organization.

6. We must be wise and clear in identifying the goal. Jesus must have been aware of the corruption that was taking place in the temple. If, as Luke's Gospel says, that from early childhood he was taken to the temple at Passover time, then he must have observed year after year the abuse of the temple. He saw the extortion and graft taking place in God's house. For Jesus it was an injustice against one's fellow human beings especially the poor. It was also an offense against the creator and loving God. It was a desecration of the holy place. The temple was supposed to be a house of

prayer for all people. In fact, the area Jesus cleansed was meant to be open for gentiles to come in and pray. But instead it was full of all the entrepreneurs who were carrying on with their business as well as using the area as a thoroughfare for those who wanted to take shortcuts through the temple. Jesus must have been indignant at the racist inscription which was placed between

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the courts of the gentiles and the inner court that basically read, "no foreigner should go in, under pain of death."

There has been much discussion on the cleansing of the temple. Both friend and foe have questioned the behavior of Jesus. Some have criticized it as an act of violence while others have defended it as a genuinely nonviolent act. Although this is not an essay that is intended for a full analysis of the event (and such is available in most commentaries on the gospels), it is important to call attention to a couple of points.

a. Usually people refer to the violent nature of the event since Jesus made a whip and used it. When we examine the text carefully, it is clear that Mark's Gospel, the first to be written, as well as Matthew and Luke do not mention the whip but they mention that Jesus turned the tables of the moneychangers. It is true that John mentions the whip but does not say that Jesus used it on people, but rather to drive the animals out

of the temple.

b. Some people have pointed out the difference between pacifism and non-violence, whereas some pacifists do not engage at all in any form of active resistance. Others believe in direct nonviolent action. I believe that, in this case, Jesus used the latter method. In a prophetic and symbolic gesture he showed how far the abuse of the temple had gone. He overturned the tables of the moneychangers and drove out the animals. It was a righteous indignation which all of us must have when we see the oppression and the dehumanization of others.

7. It is important to count the cost. Counting the cost means being aware and willing to bear the consequences of one's actions. With nonviolent work, people must be prepared to suffer, but it is they who suffer for the sake of the justice they are upholding rather than inflicting suffering on others. In the civil rights' struggle in the United States, Martin Luther King, Jr. recognized the heavy price that must be paid in the struggle for freedom but he refused to accept any violent method to achieve it. He said, "Rivers of blood may have to flow before we gain our freedom, but it must be our blood." Jesus paid the price for human redemption and liberation with his own blood. He suffered but did not inflict suffering on others. This is not always easy but many people of faith throughout the world have, in the past and present, been ready to pay it in order to achieve freedom and liberty for their own oppressed people as well as for others.

In the Christian faith, the suffering, crucifixion, and death of Jesus Christ were not the end of the story. They were followed by the joy of the resurrection. For people of faith, Good Friday is never the end. There will always be the victory and triumph of Easter. It is the birth of a new day when justice and freedom are realized. But it requires persistent nonviolent action that stems from a courageous faith that is firmly founded on justice, truth, and peace for oneself as well as for the other, even if the other is one's bitterest enemy.

ALLELUIA! CHRIST IS RISEN

The Rev. Dr. Naim Ateek is the director of Sabeel

"I engaged in many little acts of peacemaking as I walked up and down the street. I saw a Palestinian woman trying to walk by a large group of Israelis on the street up by Beit Hadassah. I walked close behind her to protect her until she was past the Israelis. I doubt that she ever realized what I had done."

From "Hebron Journal: Stories of Nonviolent Peacemaking" by Art Gish of Christian Peacemaker Teams

HUSTAVLE**

The Cry from a Wounded Planet
Sons and daughters of the Earth,
you who know good and evil:
Life is in danger! Show that you care!

Discover the Wholeness
The Earth is a tapestry woven without
seams.
No-one has the right to tear it apart.

Sense the Holiness
A holy fragrance hovers over all that exists.
Life must be valued, protected and loved.

Rejoice in the Beauty
Creation has a wealth of its own.
Nothing is mere raw material.
The gifts of the Earth must be handled
with devotion and gratitude.

Remember the Context
Your life is woven into the pattern of all
life on Earth.
All that you have is given to you in trust.
You must pass it all on to those who come
after you.

Struggle for Justice
Mother Earth has enough to meet the needs
of all,
but not to satisfy their greed.
The gap between poor and rich
is contempt for human dignity.

Live in Reconciliation
Sons and daughters of the Earth,
you who have the power to tear up her
tapestry:
you are called to a life of reconciliation!

**"Hustavle" is a Norwegian word, indicating a basic, important text. A "hustavle" was a set of "household rules," given a decorative form which made it suitable to be framed and hung in the house. This "hustavle" was created for a conference on ethics and the management of natural resources in 2001 at The Archbishops Palace, Trondheim.

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

by Samia Nasir Khoury

With the latest significant developments in our area, the year 2005 seems to be the beginning of a new era for the Palestinians. And I use the word "seems" because we have learned the hard way in this land that nothing is taken for granted. The democratic elections of a new Palestinian president that took place in January followed by municipal elections, the visit of Condoleeza Rice, the Sharm El-Sheik meeting, the appointment of a new Palestinian cabinet at the end of February, and the Conference in London at the beginning of March, are all being considered as helpful steps to bring about that new era, and a vision for dealing with the end of the occupation and the establishment of a Palestinian State along side Israel. It is a vision which has been referred to by many diplomats and news reporters as "a window of opportunity." Mr. Abbas described the London Conference as an important link in the chain of ongoing efforts to revive the peace process.

Let us hope this is not a repeat performance of Oslo. What started not as a window, but as a "gate of opportunity" in 1993, slammed in our face, and only gave Israel an opportunity under the guise of a peace process to create new facts on the ground. Now with the Wall, and more land grabbing, the new realities have made the geography maps almost obsolete. Shortly after Mr. Abbas was elected and all the focus was on the

region for a new beginning, the embarrassed Menahem Mazuz, the Israel Attorney-General, admitted to an error, apologized, and canceled the revival of the absentee property law which he claimed had gone through the cabinet without being brought to his attention. That law would have deprived West Bankers of their property in Jerusalem. A meaningless apology, indeed, because we know by now that in one way or the other, Israel will eventually confiscate even more of the land of the West Bankers. The daily papers continue to have items every day about more confiscation and annexation of land to expand the settlements in Jerusalem, Jayyous, Qalqilya and elsewhere. In Jabaa alone, north of Jerusalem, the village council received a military order at the end of February to annex 1000 dunams (1 dunum +1/4 acre) of family farmland to erect the separation wall in the area. In addition, an Israeli company known as Hemnota forged documents of Palestinian land ownership and sold it to the Keren Kayemet, the "Permanent Israeli Fund".

Despite the period of calm that was agreed upon along with the release of prisoners, 25 Palestinians have been killed, whereas none of the Palestinian factions claimed the Tel Aviv bombing. However, all the victims of that incident were Israeli soldiers, and not civilians. Most of the 500 prisoners who were re-

leased, out of a total of 8000, were due to finish their terms of incarceration anyway. Additionally, not all the women and sick prisoners were released.

Therefore, a lot is still expected from Israel. It needs to meet all the commitments and to redress all the injustice not only as a "good will gesture", but as a basic prerequisite for peace and security.

At this stage most of the Palestinian people want to believe that this is the beginning of a new era and a "window of opportunity" because they are genuinely yearning for peace and for a normal life in an independent and liberated Palestine that can guarantee a meaningful future for generations to come. Yet those same people are apprehensive because Israel has not shown one gesture to convince the Palestinians that it is genuinely serious about peace.

Of course Israeli government officials talk about peace and security all the time. This only makes the situation more complicated because the international community believes what Israel says, ignoring what Israel's intentions are. The whole picture seems upside down; when the oppressors appear as the victims, and when the oppressed are blamed for obstructing peace and are expected to protect the oppressors.

That is why it was very clear to the new

President, Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, that his first task would be to change this image. He exerted every effort to get all the Palestinian factions to agree to a period of calm so as to deprive Israel the privilege of using the suicide bombings as a justification for derailing this "opportunity" for peace and the implementation of the Road Map, by placing the blame on the Palestinians. Despite its flaws, and the objection of Israel itself to many of its articles, the Road Map, supported by the Quartet, seems to be the only remaining hope at the moment. It is supposed to guarantee a "secure Israel, and an independent and contiguous Palestinian state." Why did Mr. Bush need to emphasize "a secure Israel" when Israel is so capable of guaranteeing its own security? It is even arrogant enough to claim that it can help the USA combat "terrorism", the popular lingo nowadays, propagated by Israel. In the meantime the memory of the international community, and especially the USA and Britain, is too short



to remember that the first perpetrators of "terrorism" in this region were the Jewish underground who terrorized the Palestinians and the British Mandate in Palestine before 1948.

Aside from the security of Israel, the question that needs to be addressed is how will a contiguous Palestinian State come about, when the Israeli settlements are in the midst of the Palestinian Terri-

“ “ Therefore, a lot is still expected from Israel. It needs to meet all the commitments and to redress all the injustice not only as a “good will gesture”, but as a basic prerequisite for peace and security. ” ”

tories and when the Wall has cut the Palestinian Territories into disconnected enclaves?

With the resolve of Mr. Abbas, and the support of the international community to make this truce work and pave the way to a permanent peace, does Israel have much choice? This is the moment of truth, and it remains to be seen how Israel will deal with it. Will it choose to relinquish the Occupied Territories and live in peace and security side by side with its neighbors or will it continue to run an apartheid state of Palestinian cantons? Of course, there is always the ideal solution of one secular state for all the people of the land as an option.

By now we know Israel will never choose an option that will benefit the Palestinians, so its hidden agenda could be to put the Palestinians in a position to be forced to accept certain options: (1) to accept the reality that Israel has created on the ground and acquiesce to it, (2) to find the situation unbearable and pack up and leave, (3) to revolt and turn violent which would give Israel justification to further oppression. These three choices have actually been available for many years now, and it is a matter of who can withstand longer. The resilience of the Palestinian people can assure Is-

rael that it will not be able to get away with its plan, and the Palestinians will continue to emphasize that they have already made a substantial compromise for the sake of peace. Relinquishing their right to 78% of all historic Palestine, and acknowledging the right of Israel to exist on that 78% on which the state of Israel was created in 1948 should be enough proof of how serious the Palestinians are about peace. The myth that we are going to throw Israel into the sea will remain a myth, and no matter how hard the conditions that Israel will impose on us, it will not be able to transfer a whole population.

It is about time that Israel realizes that Israelis and Palestinians are destined to live side by side in this land, just as it realized recently that the demolishing of homes did not deter Palestinians from turning into suicide bombers. It is sad that it took so long to realize that, when so many people could have been spared a lot of suffering.

Let us hope that the new young team of technocrats which Mr. Abbas has chosen for his cabinet will have enough faith in the justice of our cause, and have plenty of energy and stamina needed for this almost impossible mission.

Nevertheless, we have learned from the first Easter event; that when all seemed lost on that "Sad Friday", when the hope of the people was crucified and buried, the Resurrection came as a totally unexpected event to restore life and hope to all. Let us keep hope alive and put our faith into action.

Samia Khoury is a board member of Sabeel

WHAT IT ALL MEANS

by Anna Jonasson

I have been an Ecumenical Accompanier in the village of Jayyous on the Northern West Bank for five months now. The presence of EAPPI in Jayyous started over two years ago when it was first known that there would be a security-barrier constructed 6 km inside the 1967-border of the Green Line. The barrier today separates the villagers from 70 percent of their farmland.

How do you help Palestinians cope with everyday life under occupation and how can you help them fight it? This question has been in my mind since I came and I still haven't found a real answer.

For most people in Jayyous, living under occupation means having to cross the security barrier everyday by passing through a gate guarded by armed soldiers to reach your land. It means having to obtain a permit from the Israeli Authority to get to your land. It means sometimes having to wait in the cold and rain for soldiers who might be late. It means living under the threat of soldiers coming to arrest your neighbor or brother in the middle of the night. It means unemployment and an almost non-existent market for your products.

But it also means caring for your family. For the children it means going to school everyday. It means getting engaged and later married. It means fasting during Ramadan and celebrating with gifts and good food. It means showing an overwhelming amount of friendliness and hospitality towards internationals passing through the village. It means opening your heart and home to people who

will not necessarily give you anything back.

In our "Ecumenical House" we've had visitors nearly every day. One night it might be a group of men telling us that their sheep were wandering around loose on the other side of the fence because the shepherd had been arrested. Another day it would be a 16-year old boy who had been beaten by a soldier. One night we witnessed two boys getting shot in their leg and arm next to the gate. There were the women who came and asked what they should do not to get pregnant again. There were the women and men who wanted to learn English. There were the sweet neighbor girls who just wanted to talk or play. Could we help them in some way? Sometimes yes, other times no.



Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI)



Uprooting of olive trees

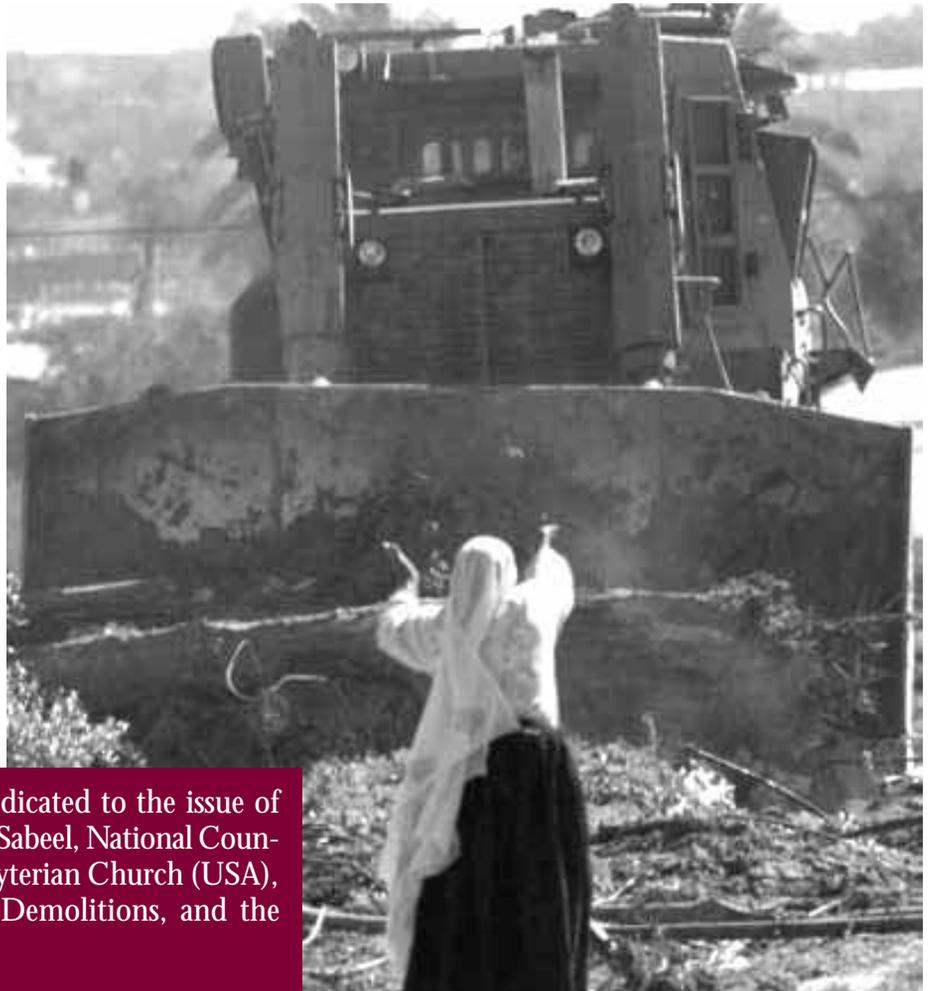
Being in Jayyous has meant learning how to receive, at least as much as sharing and helping. As an accompanier you take part in the hardships and injustices as well as the moments of happiness and joy. Even though you might think people would feel hatred and bitterness towards the world for letting this happen, I have never met such hospitable and generous people in my life.

When I get back to Sweden, I will talk to people about the injustices. I will talk about the illegal barrier and the economic losses. But most of all I will talk about the people, the people that so much deserve their freedom and human rights, the Palestinian people who are longing for peace and justice to be able to lead a normal life. Only then will the Israeli people also be able to live in peace and security.

Anna Jonasson is a EAPPI volunteer

TO DIVEST OR NOT TO DIVEST THAT IS THE QUESTION

The World Council of Churches, in a press release dated 21 February 2005 stated "...there is a growing interest among churches in taking new actions that demonstrate commitment to and enhance prospects for a just, equitable and lasting peace in both Israel and Palestine. Notable among these are initiatives within churches to become better stewards of justice in economic affairs which link them to on-going violations of international law in occupied territory. Therefore [WCC] encourages member churches to work for peace in new ways and to give serious consideration to economic measures that are equitable, transparent and non-violent [and] reminds churches with investment funds that they have an opportunity to use these funds responsibly in support of peaceful solutions to conflict. Economic pressure, appropriately and openly applied, is on such means of action."



Watch for the next Cornerstone dedicated to the issue of Divestment including statements by Sabeel, National Council of Churches in Christ, the Presbyterian Church (USA), Israeli Committee Against Home Demolitions, and the World Council of Churches.

"Nonviolence that merely offers civil resistance to the authorities and goes no further scarcely deserves the name ahimsa [action based on the refusal to do harm]. You may if you like, call it unarmed resistance...Nonviolence is the greatest and most active force in the world. One cannot be passively nonviolent...Passive resistance is a misnomer for nonviolent resistance. It is much more active than violent resistance. It is direct, ceaseless but three-fourths invisible and only one-fourth visible...In its visibility it appears ineffective, but it is really intensely active and most effective in ultimate result."

"Nonviolence in Peace and War" by M. K. Gandhi

WITNESS VISIT PARTICIPANTS INVEST IN PALESTINE

During Sabeel's Spring Witness Visit, "The Quest for Peace", the group of 30 participants visited the small village of Taybeh located inside the West Bank just east of Ramallah. It used to be a short 12-minute drive to the city of Ramallah where many of the residents of Taybeh were employed, attended schools, and sought medical care. Now, due to severe travel restrictions, a series of checkpoints and newly constructed settler by-pass roads, the 1200 residents of Taybeh have been cut off from the city, limiting employment and access to the amenities that Ramallah provided.

Taybeh, whose biblical name is Ephraim, is the only remaining entirely Christian village in the West Bank. It once boasted a population of over 7000 until the war of 1967 forced many into exile. As a result, the remaining townsfolk have had to struggle to maintain their presence in this historic village. Since employment in Ramallah and other cities is difficult and unreliable, the local priests and businessmen have created new ways to provide income for several local families

through innovative "cottage industries".

For thousands of years the growing of olive trees and the processing of the olive oil they produce has provided the region with its major source of income. However, in the past century industry and construction have attracted many away from this age-old vocation. With the current restrictions in movement creating a high unemployment rate, the village is returning to its "roots" in the production and exportation of olive oil, putting high hopes on generating enough international interest to provide sustainable incomes for several local families. The group of Witness Visitors was deeply impressed by the newly renovated olive press building where olive oil, soap, carved olive wood, and clay oil lamps in the shape of doves, are made and packaged for sale and shipping. Fr. Ra'ed Abusahlia, the local Roman Catholic parish priest, has been not only a key visionary, but a driving force in his efforts to make this a viable and profitable venture. Fr. Ra'ed notes that there are millions of gallons of oil in excess to what the region can consume making exportation a necessity. Through his persistence and good relations with friends in Europe he has been able to obtain an export agreement that



exempts them from paying the 118% export tax. He is currently attempting to place an olive oil peace lamp in every church in Europe. "But why stop there?" was the question on others' minds who hail from the United States and the U.K. Many participants "invested in Palestine" by purchasing Peace Lamps for their own churches.

This impressive show of faith in action demonstrates how a concern for one's fellow human beings can take on monumental proportions and provide new hope where once there was despair.

For more information on how you can support this ministry and invest in Palestine, purchase olive oil products, or help Fr. Ra'ed fulfill his vision by giving a peace lamp to your church or organization (comes complete with oil, wick, refill cup), contact peacelamp@lpj.org



Witness Visit 'The Quest for Peace'

From March 4th to 11th a group of 30 internationals joined together for Sabeel's Witness Visit - 'The Quest for Peace'. A balance of first-timers and returning participants fueled discussion with experienced reflection and fresh astonishment at the countless realities on the ground, which are not featured in the international media. Palestinian voices told the Palestinian stories from the cave dwellers facing harassment and eviction in the south Hebron hills to the treatment of Arab-Israelis as second class citizens in the north of Galilee. There was more outrage and sadness felt the more the wall was encountered as it cuts through East Jerusalem, restricts Bethlehem, and encircles Tulkarem and Jayyous. However, the group visit also revealed the hope of the Palestinians which refuses to be extinguished. The group attended the rededication service of the Friends Meeting House in Ramallah and witnessed the hope coming out from the ashes of the Jenin refugee camp as the people engage in their physical and emotional rebuilding.

Andy Pring is a volunteer at Sabeel.



What made the greatest impression? The wall, the wall, the longest wailing wall in the world? and its consequences. The first evening's sermon by Samia Khoury saw our visit as a hopeful sign. But hoping is almost like faith. If not translated into action, it will be dead. So, we went into action, traveling around to villages and towns, seeing, listening, understanding more and more. We got furious about the wall blocks closing the streets that separated the Abu Dis villagers from their work places. They had to climb up and around the wall or steal through the convent's garden morning and afternoon. A barber from Abu Dis was separated from his wife and partly disabled children on the Jerusalem side. We were taken into Wallaje and Wadi Foukin villages, where Israeli police do not even allow the villagers to move freely between separate parts of the village, and where home owners are forced to pay for their own house demolitions! We saw clearly that the wall is not a security wall. It is a politically motivated occupation-of-land wall, with the legal owners largely left outside taking in as few Palestinians and as much of their land as possible!

The greatest hope of the situation might be that the Berlin wall suddenly fell, and some years before & the walls of Jericho fell tumbling down! Let us hope and pray that one day this wall

shall fall. We go away with strong impressions from the reality on the ground and thanks to every Palestinian who still keeps hope for the future.

*Hallvard Beck,
Oslo, Norway.*

"Recall my most moving experience" - an impossible request. I was close to tears so many times. Shall I write of the people of Jayyous, denied access to their precious land, and looking at the notice on those metal gates, which may or may not be opened for brief periods at the whim of the military? Or of the eight-metre-high Wall running down the main street in Qalandia cutting off the people from family and friends just across the way? Or the Wall near the Comboni Sisters Convent, where people of all ages were attempting to scramble over and through a small gap (in a way insulting to their dignity) trying to get to work or school, while lower down the same stretch of Wall, sits the home for the aged, marooned, where the Sisters are desperate that the families would no longer be able to get to visit parents or other relatives? ... One can scarcely be selective in such circumstances. One can only admire those who cope with such determination. Walls can and must come down.

Mavis Howard, U.K.



“FRIENDS” REDEDICATE MEETING HOUSE

On Sunday, March 6, 2005 around 100 locals and internationals from a variety of denominations and organizations participated in the rededication of the newly renovated Society of Friends (Quakers) Meeting House in Ramallah. The Meeting House was first dedicated on March 6, 1910 but had fallen into disrepair as the main commercial area of the city shifted locations, and the continuing military occupation and invasions made the facility unusable. Jean Zaru, vice president of the Sabeel Board, and Clerk of the Friends Meeting House in Ramallah, presided over the rededication service. With the reopening of the renovated facility the Quakers will once again be able to meet some of the needs of the community by providing a space for meetings, events, and worship.

Sabeel extends our sincere best wishes to the Society of Friends in Ramallah as we look forward to joint efforts of putting our faith in action.

For the Quakers

by Bianca Bradbury

Theirs is the gentle finger on the pulse
Of war's old woe.
Persistent, with the clear
unrancored eyes
Of faith, they go
Where disillusion lost
the chartered way.
Unerringly
They reach across the
desperate long miles,
The sullen seas,
And find the thin small
fingers in the cold,
And touch, and hold.

2005

SABEEL INTERNATIONAL WITNESS FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE VISIT

“Be not afraid, speak
out and do not keep
silent: I am with
you.” Acts 18:9

Visit begins with lunch on Friday, October 28 and concludes with closing worship and dinner on Friday, November 4.

Witness Visit will include:

- Exposure trips to see the political “facts on the ground” in the West Bank
- Advocacy workshops
- Lectures by Palestinian and Israeli experts
- Visits to holy sites in Jerusalem and the Galilee
- Jerusalem's Old City

For more information

visit our website: www.sabeel.org • e mail: world@sabeel.org

A MINISTRY OF CARING

The Rev. Elizabeth Knott and her colleague, Connie DePond, have put their faith into action for several years through a ministry of sales which supports and encourages local Palestinian organizations and the women who are associated with these organizations. Following is Liz's account of this productive and vital ministry.

"From my experience of visiting the unholy Holy Land in 1992, I realized that the Palestinian story is one of the most untold, misconstrued, and misunderstood stories of our time. I have come to see that the Palestinian story is one of betrayals and broken promises. As a way of providing a venue for telling this story in addition to standing in solidarity with the Palestinian people, I established a volunteer not-for-profit ministry of importing Palestinian sculpted olivewood and counted cross-stitch needlework.

Since 1993 my colleague, Connie DePond, and I have been transporting suitcases and boxes to churches all over the United States as well as shipping consignment orders. Originally I thought this venture would be short-term...very short-term. However, because the situation keeps deteriorating, it has extended to almost 12 years. During this time, we have been responsible for returning over \$400,000 to Palestine through Christian-managed organizations. These organizations provide a variety of critical ministries to the Palestinian people. This sum of monies has come from grants, individual gifts, and congregational gifts as well as monies

from sales. As part of our ministry we have been given many opportunities to interpret the Palestinian situation to numerous congregations. During these presentations we emphasize that the occupation is itself violent and the source of violence. We appeal to audiences to

“ “ If you succumb to the temptation of using violence in the struggle, unborn generations will be the recipients of a long and desolate night of bitterness, and your chief legacy to the future will be an endless reign of meaningless chaos.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

“ ” speak the truth to their elected officials and to seek justice for the Palestinian people.”

Liz is a retired Presbyterian minister and Connie is a Presbyterian elder. Although Liz is going on 78 and Connie is 70, age is no barrier to working for justice and peace and freedom for the Palestinian people. "If we can do it, anyone can!" says Liz. They are looking for new con-

gregations to offer the beautifully carved olivewood and counted cross-stitch needlework. They know that people will be thrilled and not disappointed with their quality and beauty. They stock over 200 olivewood items from a Christian family in Bethlehem and 60 counted cross-stitch items from the West Bank and Gaza. Their joy is in showing the ancient Palestinian craftsmanship and returning monies to alleviate some of the pain and suffering of the Palestinian people. Congregations can make a tremendous difference by providing the opportunity for people to see and to purchase, especially during the Fall when people are already thinking about Christmas gifts and bazaars. Pal Craftaid operates under the umbrella of the Associated Ministries of Greater Pierce County, WA, USA.

After almost 12 years of operating out of their home, Liz and Connie are looking for someone(s) to share or take over this unique and vital ministry in 2006. The job requires a strong back because it is labor intensive, especially during advent; a strong heart for the work of justice, and a strong commitment to the Palestinian people. Networking, business and computer skills are a plus.

For more information contact:
PalCraftaid
106 SW 299th Place
Federal Way, WA 98023 USA
Tel: (001) 253-946-4810

Mark Your Calendars...

Sabeel's 6th International Conference

The Forgotten Faithful

The Challenges and Witness of Palestinian Christians

November 3-10, 2006

(dates to be confirmed)

Snapshots of our Activities

How could the New Year bring in good tidings to the world when a natural disaster had hit South East Asia only days before the end of 2004? Pictures of the Tsunami victims remained in the minds of the Palestinians as they headed to the electoral booths to choose their President from among seven candidates. Though it was not surprising that Mahmoud Abbas, Abu Mazen, was the winner, the Palestinians set an example of democracy in the Arab World and proved to the international monitoring bodies that, given the chance, they are determined and able to build their sovereign state. Sabeel, committed to work for a just peace, is also determined to have an active role in the 'building' challenge.

The sabeel 'way' may be long and not-so-smooth, but in order to go forth with courage and hope the Sabeel staff and some board members 'retreated' on January 11/12 to the sanctuary of the Comboni Spirituality Center situated on the Jerusalem side of the Wall in Abu Dis. The convent is sandwiched between a hideous concrete wall that blocks the main entrance and a taller and longer unfinished wall that encircles the area, thus preventing free access to and from the West Bank. However, the wonderful nuns and

their neighboring Passionist priests have opened their back gates to allow hundreds of Palestinian students, workers, vendors, shepherds and sheep to walk through their premises in order to try and cross into their areas of work, study and pastures. Moved by this example of faith in action, the Sabeel staff explored the liberating principles that guide social service and nurture co-living and equality. Feeling revived and filled with new energy, they embarked on their programs.

COMMUNITY-BUILDING PROGRAMS

• ELECTIONS

A group of 40 Jerusalem residents attended the panel discussion on "the responsibilities of Jerusalemites in the civil society". Randa Siniora, Director of Al-Haq and Azzam Abu Saoud, member of the Chamber of Commerce exposed the pros and cons of Jerusalem residents participating in the upcoming Palestinian elections. A representative of the Electoral Committee in Jerusalem tried to answer the technical questions about the logistics of an electoral system hindered by the occupation; and Naim Ateek who moderated the session explained the theological basis and arguments that encourage individuals to remain firm and take bold decisions.

• THE OPEN FORUM

During the January monthly family program, The Open Forum, Naim Ateek explored the possibilities of living one's life to the full, "I came that they may have life and have it to the full" (John 10:10) despite the depress-



Jericho-YWCA

ing and difficult times in which we live. On February 24, the discussion revolved around the undocumented activities of the young Jesus, and the spiritual and educational significance of the verse: 'And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor'. (Luke 2:52). As the number of participants and the questions increase, Sabeel may have to consider more than one meeting a month!

• ECUMENICAL SERVICE

Sabeel, YWCA, YMCA, IOCC (International Orthodox Charitable Committees), and Caritas-Jerusalem, held a special ecumenical service for the Tsunami victims on January 15 at St. Stephen's Cathedral (Dominicans). The Right Rev. Samir Kafity, former Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem delivered the homily reminding us that we are all part of a global village that bonds us together. He encouraged those present to contribute generously in prayer and in their financial contributions to assist the bereaved, the orphans and homeless, and those traumatized. Prayers and hymns of different traditions and languages reflected the global dependence on God's mercy.

• LENT

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:13) Hope is the theme chosen for this year's programs. The first session was conducted in Jericho on February 15. Bishop George Khazoumian, The Patriarchal Vicar of the Armenian Catholic Church, and Sabeel volunteer Andy Pring accompanied the 52 women from Jerusalem on their spiritual and educational field day. Inspired by the breathtaking view from the the hill facing Wadi al-Qelt and the monastery of St George, the group joined in the Bishop's reflections on the hope of the two blind men healed by Jesus outside Jericho. There was also joy for the young bedouin peddlars who managed to sell most of their bags and accessories to this group of local 'tourists'.

The next sign of hope was evident in the kindergarden run by the YWCA in the refugee camp of Aqbat Jaber. Sixty smiling children, undisturbed by the trooping visitors, continued their drawing, counting, and singing in their

comfortable and well-equipped classrooms. Nazar Halteh, the president of the Jericho YWCA, gave an overview of the expanding work of the association both in the camp and the local area, expressing the power of faith in action. The group then relaxed at al-Rawda restaurant, where several YWCA Board members joined the Jerusalem party. The reunion was completed when Father Firas Hijazzin, the Franciscan parish priest now stationed in Jericho met with his old parishioners from Jerusalem.

More people, including the mayor of Jericho, joined in the lesson on Zachaeus presented by both clergymen. The final stop was at the Food Production Center at the YWCA where citrus, dairy products and herbs were quickly swished off the shelves and purchased by the group. The mixture of spirituality and fun has proven to be an attractive way of seeking and finding hope together. The presence of thirteen newcomers on the tour is surely a positive sign.

On March 1, Naim Ateek led the group discussion about Hope, the source of which lies in God and in the resurrection. The "Good News" helps the believers 'boast in the suffering that produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, the hope that does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.' (Romans 5: 3-5) Hope is indeed a grace and a blessed power. Sister Vicky Giacaman, the principal of St. Joseph's School for girls in Jerusalem, concluded the last session of the





YWCA-Aqbat Jaber Refugee Camp-Jericho

Lent program at the YWCA where Sabeel and the YWCA celebrated Women's Day on March 8. The program recognized three outstanding Palestinian women who had put their faith into action. Betty Majaj, Director of Mt. of Olives Center for the physically handicapped, Georgette Rizek, Head of the Greek Catholic Medical Center, and Nora Kort, Director of IOCC. Over 80 women shared animated conversation over a delicious lunch and eagerly rushed in to hear a woman's point of view on hope. Sister Vicky's lively presentation accentuated by inspiring slides, brought a very pleasant day to its apex.

YOUTH

During the Christmas season, the youth did volunteer work at Zeina Center in Shu'fat, where they brought joy to children afflicted with cancer. They joined in decorating the Christmas tree and having Santa Claus distribute gifts. Suad Jarayseh, a local radio-broadcaster for children, told the

story of how Jesus was born. This event was a joint project with St. Francis Church youth group.

On January 4, halfway between Western and Eastern Christmas, 68 young people enjoyed the first Youth Christmas Dinner held at YWCA. A local group, Raja' (Arabic for "hope") entertained with hymns



Ecumenical youth service -Bethlehem

and led meditations. At the end of the dinner the youth exchanged gifts.

Two weeks later, 38 youth, accompanied by Deeb Dides, a local tour guide, participated in a trip to Akko and Mjiedel, inside Israel proper, where the two remaining churches are evidence of a once-Christian Palestinian presence in these towns. Father Jack Karam, the Franciscan priest, regularly assembles the youth from the neighboring towns and villages in worship and community activities. Ten young people welcomed the group, sharing singing and lunch. Because of bad weather plans had to be changed, but the guide managed to capture the attention of the young people as he explained the history of our land and the religious sites. Equal to the spiritual revival experienced in Mjiedel was the exciting boat ride in Akko Bay.

A special program for Lent took place on the 26th of February. Ninety-four youth and young adults from different denominations gathered from Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Beit Jala and Beit Sahour to attend the service at the

Crusaders' Church below the Church of the Nativity. Father Marwan D'ides, a Franciscan priest, spoke about the pain of the crucifixion and the hope that it led to. Reflections also took place by members of the Syrian Orthodox Church in addition to different prayers and hymns from different church traditions. This was followed by a reception and fellowship.

WOMEN

The year 2005 introduced a series of reflections on "Women of the Bible" for both local and international women. The Rev. Joyce Wilson, pastor in the United Methodist Church, is leading the Bible studies in English as Cedar Duaybis translates into Arabic. The creative approach not only helps participants learn from the models, but links history with contextual realities, encouraging the acceptance of others with their differences. The first session focused on Ruth the Moabite, and her special relationship with Naomi, her mother-in-law. On February 22, Mary Magdalene came to life through unique courtroom drama. The audience discovered the remarkable qualities of this controversial person who was commissioned to spread the good news of the resurrection. On March 15, it is "Mary, the Mother" who will come to life as Jerusalem and Nazareth women meet in Mjeidel for the final session of the season before women get too busy with Easter preparations.

CO-LIVING (INTERFAITH)

The program was launched on February 2 with a presentation about the religious concept of Al-Adha feast for the Muslims and Easter for Christians. Dr. Musatapha Abu Sway and Father

Rafiq Khoury, both explained their understanding of sacrifice and tried to associate the feasts of sacrifice with our daily life, politically and socially. The many questions that arose, especially from the Christian participants, is reason enough for the co-living dialogue.

THE NAZARETH BRANCH

The Young Couples group met on February 18 to set their program for the coming year that will include the launching of three books, the continued spiritual guidance sessions, a retreat in April, meetings with Jewish groups, and a lecture series with prominent speakers.

On February 19, The Nazareth Committee held its visioning session and presented their ambitious plans of expansion to executive members Samia Khoury and Cedar Duaybis, and staff member Nora Carmi who are eager to help find funds in order to implement the new projects.

OTHER

Sawsan Bittar, Coordinator for Clergy Programs participated as a workshop leader at a Presbyterian conference in Louisville, Kentucky in February. The Rev Naim Ateek was also hosted by Friends of Sabeel-NA where he was a speaker at two of their conferences, one in Austin, TX and one in Atlanta, GA.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

There certainly is an atmosphere of hope in the increasing number of delegations and groups who have visited Sabeel in the past two months. Students from theological seminaries, a CPT delegation, Mennonite Advocacy leaders, EAPPI activists, Amos Trust group, The Church of Scotland, The National Council of Churches in Christ, International YMCA-YWCA youth leaders, and French Catholics who are interested in beginning an IFOS chapter in France, all shared their interests and looked for ways to show their solidarity.



Sharing a meal in Hebron

Purpose Statement of Sabeel

Sabeel is an ecumenical grassroots liberation theology movement among Palestinian Christians. Inspired by the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, this liberation theology seeks to deepen the faith of Palestinian Christians, promote unity among them, and lead them to act for justice and love. *Sabeel* strives to develop a spirituality based on justice, peace, non-violence, liberation, and reconciliation for the different national and faith communities. The word 'Sabeel' is Arabic for 'the way' and also a 'channel' or 'spring' of life-giving water.

Sabeel also works to promote a more accurate international awareness regarding the identity, presence, and witness of Palestinian Christians as well as their contemporary concerns. It encourages individuals and groups from around the world to work for a just, comprehensive, and enduring peace informed by truth and empowered by prayer and action.

For more information on *Friends of Sabeel* groups in your area please contact our International representatives or the Sabeel Center in Jerusalem.



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