



FOSNA

FRIENDS of SABEEL NORTH AMERICA

The Voice
semi-annual
newsletter

September 2016



Dear FOSNA family,

I would first of all like to thank you for your continued support as we strengthen and expand our advocacy efforts in support of Palestinian justice. In 2016, you have supported some major successes, including three church denominations' divestment from Israel's occupation, numerous local municipal efforts aimed at passing investment screens, and major FOSNA conferences that put liberation theology into practice through advocacy.

Furthermore, at our 2017 leadership planning retreat last month, many of you supported staff in promoting Palestinian Liberation Theology and our anti-oppression work by helping outline FOSNA's programmatic activities. During the next several months, our staff members will involve you in these programmatic, development, and fundraising plans, including new ways we're making our communication structures more effective.

We have made it through two-thirds of our fiscal year, and we continue to seek your generous donations to make this year a success.

Most importantly, we have continued to do what Sabeel-Jerusalem has requested of us: Support our sisters and brothers in Palestine to assert their **place at the table of justice**. And in so doing, we've affirmed the "other side" of the truth, stating: "This table is God's table. We do not accept your exclusion of the Palestinians, as the table includes everyone—Israelis, Palestinians, and all humankind. We will work with all in fulfilling His spirit, jointly growing in love in our quest to bring His will to Earth as it is in Heaven."

As we take direct actions in claiming that space at the table, let us also be mindful of inclusivity, remembering that our successes today for Palestinian justice are ones that all, including those who are opposing us today, will one day celebrate with us! As such, we will continue to act *and* continue to love, remembering these words for that day of rejoicing:

*For God has composed the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its members should have mutual concern for one another. **If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.***

As your organization fighting for Palestinian justice, we thank you for your generosity as we enter into our third quarter of the year, and we are humbled by your support.

Blessings,

Tarek Abuata
Executive Director

Charity provides crumbs from the table; justice offers a place at the table.

— Bill Moyers —

Eulogy for The Rt. Rev. Edmond Lee Browning 24th Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church USA

“ . . . soft voice, big heart, great courage . . . ”

by Rev. Canon Naim Ateek

Given at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral in Portland, Oregon, on July 19, 2016



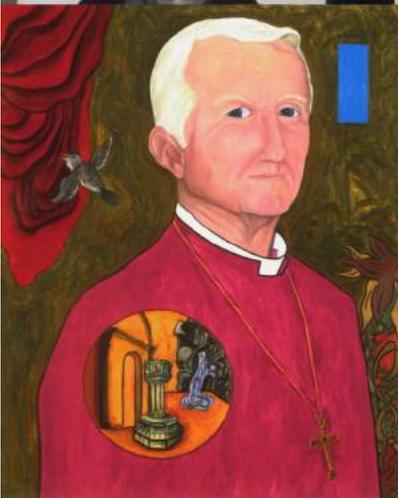
On behalf of Sabeel and Friends of Sabeel North America I would like to express my deepest condolences and sincere sympathies to Patti Browning and to all the Browning family. We share your grief. We also loved Bishop Browning; and we give thanks to God for his life and witness.

It is a great honor and privilege to be asked to take part in this funeral service for a person I loved, admired, and respected greatly. Bishop Browning was the president of FOSNA from its inception in 1996 until he became president emeritus in 2012. He and Patti visited us in Jerusalem a number of times. They were both dedicated to the quest for a just peace in Palestine and Israel. In one of our international conferences, Bishop Browning was the keynote speaker in Jerusalem. He and Patti were true friends and staunch supporters of Sabeel's ministry.



When I think of Bishop Browning, two words come to mind: The first is humility: During his time as presiding bishop, he met with presidents and world leaders and he had a good collection of photos with them. On a visit to his home in Hood River, I expected to see those pictures displayed in the living room. To my surprise they were relegated to a lesser visible place in the house. This is the kind of person Bishop Browning was. He walked with kings and presidents but did not lose the common touch. He was reachable, approachable, and accessible. "God gives grace to the humble."

The second word is courage: Bishop Browning had a soft voice but a big heart and great courage. In the Gospels, Jesus criticized religious leaders for having eyes but not seeing. Bishop Browning's eyes could see. He saw the agony of the victims of injustice. When he visited Palestine, he felt with the Palestinians who were living under the oppressive Israeli occupation of their country. Like Bishop Desmond Tutu who also visited us, he could see and feel the injustice and oppression. In 2003, with the help of Bishop Browning, we were able to invite Bishop Tutu to become the international patron of Sabeel. He continues in this role to this day. Bishop Browning took a courageous stand for justice for the Palestinians. Even when it was not fashionable, he stood on the side of the marginalized. For Bishop Browning, there were no outcasts. His stance reflected the spirit of love and compassion for the victims of discrimination.



Passage to Eternity, icon from Episcopal Church in Brazil

As we pay our respects for this dear friend and brother, I believe he still has a pertinent message for us all: "Don't forget the victims of discrimination and racism in your communities. Work for their liberation." And I would like to think that he has a special word to the leaders of our Episcopal Church, bishops, clergy, and lay: "Don't forget the Palestinians. They too are God's children. Champion their just cause, and work for their liberation so that they and their Israeli neighbors may live in security and peace."



News from FOSNA's Board of Trustees

Introducing Six New Board Members



Dear friends,

Grace and peace to you on behalf of the board of Friends of Sabeel North America!

I am humbled and grateful for the opportunity to serve as president of the FOSNA Board of Trustees. I look forward to working with all of you to amplify the voices of Palestinian Christians and peace builders of all faiths and convictions who stand with the oppressed and who work for a just peace in Palestine and Israel.

I first encountered the work of Sabeel as a young adult missionary with Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church. I served in the Sabeel Jerusalem office from September 2007 to December 2008. While my time in Jerusalem was relatively short, my own faith and my understanding of justice, peace, and nonviolence was deeply affected by the stories of the Sabeel community and its allies.

As friends of Sabeel, we are in an exciting time. This year marks the 20th anniversary of Friends of Sabeel North America. FOSNA's dynamic and growing national staff is on the forefront of denominational advocacy efforts, local divestment campaigns, and the building of broad-based coalitions to confront injustice and effect change. Each month, it seems, brings news of divestment victories. From Sabeel Jerusalem, we hear powerful stories of the reinvigoration of Palestinian Liberation Theology and contextual biblical reflection among the Palestinian Christian community. Local FOSNA groups across the country are advocating in their communities and envisioning new and innovative ways to educate and advocate for justice and peace.

At the same time, we are painfully aware of the dire situation in Palestine and Israel. The need has never been more urgent for the moral voice of the churches to be heard, to speak and act for justice and an end to occupation and oppression.

Friends of Sabeel North America is committed to growing our capacity, our effectiveness, and our reach to advance the cause of justice and peace in Palestine and Israel. I thank you for your support, and hope that you will continue to offer your prayers, your energy, your time, and your resources to this important work.

In gratitude and peace,

David Finnegan-Hosey, M.Div
President of the Board of Trustees



L. Michael Spath is the founder and executive director of the Indiana Center for Middle East Peace, a former coordinator for Kairos U.S.A., and a member of the United Church of Christ Palestine-Israel Network. He holds a Ph.D. in historical theology with an emphasis in Islam and Muslim-Christian relations and a doctor of ministry degree. He is recently retired from university teaching in religious studies. Until 2014, he served as theologian-in-residence at First Presbyterian Church in Fort Wayne, Indiana.



Nicholas Ammar grew up with his Palestinian-American activist mother and was attentive to oppression and power from a young age. He has a master's in sociocultural anthropology from UC Davis, where he researched the lived experiences of community resistance in Palestine. He owns and operates the printing business that has been in his family for 30 years. He knows that freedom for Palestine will come only when all people—especially indigenous, imprisoned, and colonized communities—have true sovereignty.



Diane Dulin is ordained in the United Church of Christ and served for 34 years as pastor to congregations in California and Oregon. She now devotes her time to advocacy efforts in support of Palestinian freedom. Dulin is active in the UCC Palestine Israel Network, UCC Wider Church Ministries including YWCA of Palestine, and interfaith Oregon-based efforts such as Occupation Free Portland. Within FOSNA, Dulin serves on the Theology Committee.



Robert Ross is an associate professor of global cultural studies at Point Park University. He serves as chair of advocacy for the Israel/Palestine Mission Network of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and is on the organizing collective of the US Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel. He has written numerous articles about Palestine and Israel in publications such as *Electronic Intifada*, *Counterpunch*, *Mondoweiss*, *Presbyterian News Service*, and *Unbound: An Interactive Journal of*



Julie Brenton Rowe has been a reporter, international banker, pastor, chaplain, director of pastoral care, and missionary. She spent four years in Jerusalem and continued advocacy work with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's Peace not Walls and Middle East strategy after returning home. She was also on a three-month team in Ramallah for the then-new Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme for Palestine and Israel in 2003–2004.



Taurean J. Webb is an assistant pastor at the Second Baptist Church of Evanston, Illinois, and scholar-in-residence and program coordinator at the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference. He has a PhD in theology from Garrett Seminary in Evanston and is a race studies scholar, including colonialism and imperialism. He approaches the Israel-Palestine issue from the perspective of the intersectionality of black church mobilization and Palestinian resistance.



U.S. and Canadian Churches Forge Ahead with BDS in 2016

By the Rev. Dr. Donald Wagner

Churches are often slow to embrace progressive political and social positions, so it is no surprise that the **Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions** movement has been particularly difficult for some denominations. But two important decisions seem to have broken the impasse: After a 10-year struggle, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) passed a divestment resolution by a narrow margin in June 2014. That vote was followed by the overwhelming majority decision by the United Church of Christ in June 2015 to divest. These two victories provided momentum in 2016, when several denominations set the stage for a series of BDS victories.

The initial decision came when the United Methodist Pension and Health Benefits Fund, one of the largest church pension funds in North America, voted in January that Israel's five largest banks were ineligible for its investment. That was followed by the Catholic Conference of Major Superiors of Men, voting in March to boycott products from Israel's illegal settlements. The Alliance of Baptists, a progressive Baptist denomination, voted in April to "divest from all companies profiting from the occupation of Palestinian lands."

The only setback occurred in March 2016, when the United Methodist General Convention failed to pass its divestment resolution. Significant pressure by the government of Israel on international delegates and presidential candidate Hillary Clinton's letter to Methodist delegates undoubtedly had their desired impact. Clinton's message read in part: "We need to make countering BDS a priority.....to reverse this trend with information and advocacy, and fight back against further attempts to isolate and delegitimize Israel."



In June, as the Presbyterians gathered in Portland, Oregon, many analysts feared the Zionists would reverse the 2014 decision in favor of BDS. But then the assembly adopted the Belhar Confession into its Book of Confessions, the doctrinal core of the denomination. The Belhar Confession was a South African Dutch Reformed creed that articulated a liberation theology perspective calling the church to oppose all forms of racism and inequality, and to embrace the struggles of the poor and disenfranchised.

As the assembly adopted resolutions supporting gender equality, environmental justice, and other progressive agendas, the Israel-Palestine resolutions quickly followed:

- The assembly approved "a two-year prayerful study of BDS" in relation to Palestine and Israel.
- It adopted a human rights approach to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict rather than the standard two-state position. Language by pro-Zionist groups to characterize BDS as anti-Semitic was defeated.
- The Zionist resolution calling for the Presbyterians to withdraw from the Campaign to End the Occupation was soundly defeated.
- The resolution condemning "the systematic patterns of ill-treatment and torture of Palestinian children within the Israeli prison system" found overwhelming support.
- The resolution asking the real estate firm RE/MAX to end its sale of properties in the illegal Israeli settlements also found strong support.

New FOSNA board member Bob Ross coordinated advocacy efforts for the Israel/Palestine Mission Network, the progressive advocacy movement in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The only defeat at the Presbyterian General Assembly was a resolution for churches and church members to boycott Hewlett-Packard products.

In July, the Mennonite Church in Canada voted overwhelmingly to "advise their churches and members to avoid investing in or supporting companies that do business with Israeli settlements and the Israeli Defense Forces." As the Unitarian Universalists considered their first BDS resolution, they achieved a majority (54%) but not the needed two-thirds. However, the Unitarians are the first denomination to reach a majority vote on BDS in their initial year of consideration, which bodes well for future BDS support. The United Church of Canada reached a majority vote in favor of "implementing ethical divestment strategies from companies that derive substantial benefit or contribute significantly to, furthering the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory." The church also instructed its pension fund-related bodies,

Continued on next page →

Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions: A Pivotal Moment

By Rochelle Gause, National Organizer

I am very honored to have spent a full year supporting the amazing advocacy work FOSNA members are involved in throughout the country. The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement is gaining momentum and our efforts are contributing. Municipal campaigns—with the goal of preventing local governments from investing or contracting with companies that profit off the occupation—are sprouting up in new cities regularly. Each time I join a national local group call, I hear word of new powerful educational efforts like South Florida Friends of Sabeel's event with the Dream Defenders: Struggles for Liberation: Injustice from Ferguson to Palestine.

Although G4S announced in its shareholders report that it will leave Israel in the next two years, ending its complicity in child detention and torture in Israeli prisons, several indicators have shown us this is unlikely. FOSNA organizers have stepped up their efforts to end contracts with G4S: In Sacramento, California, organizers are working hard to get their transit board to drop G4S. In Denver, after receiving pressure from organizers, the water board refused to renew its contract with G4S. Just last month, Berkeley, California, divested from G4S. Our UN Drop G4S campaign led to G4S's losing contracts with three UN agencies in Jordan. We are successfully applying pressure and we must continue to do so.

You can gauge the impact of the BDS movement by the growing attempts to stop it: The Israeli Office of Strategic Affairs has dedicated \$25 million and 10 new employees solely to that purpose, Israel has banned BDS movement co-founder Omar Barghouti from travelling and threatened to revoke his residency status, and 23 states currently face anti-BDS legislation of some kind. FOSNA members are a part of the coalitions fighting for our constitutional right to boycott in Colorado, California, Iowa, Maryland, and beyond. Over 100 clergy members signed our national statement denouncing this legislation.

Continued from previous page

including congregations, "to divest from companies that derive substantial benefit from the illegal occupation."

Perhaps the most surprising development came in August, when the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America voted overwhelmingly "to adopt a human rights-based screen for its social responsibility funds to ensure the church is not profiting from human rights abuses." Then the Lutherans voted "to end U.S. aid to Israel until the latter freezes the construction of settlements built on occupied Palestinian land in violation of longstanding official U.S. policy and international law." Prior to this assembly the ELCA had been reluctant to adopt such decisions as national policy. This is a remarkable step forward and adds to the momentum that is building in North American churches.



No Child Behind Bars Speaking Tour

by Nadya Tannous, Tour Coordinator

Indeed our survival and liberation depend upon our recognition of the truth when it is spoken and lived by the people. If we cannot recognize the truth, then it cannot liberate us from untruth. To know the truth is to appropriate it, for it is not mainly reflection and theory. Truth is divine action entering our lives and creating the human action of liberation. — James H. Cone

Ahed Tamimi has been marching in the weekly protests in her village of Nabi Saleh, in the occupied West Bank, since she was 8 years old. This year, Ahed turns 15 and is a leader in the nonviolent movement against the everyday oppressions of occupation.

Amanda Weatherspoon is a Unitarian Universalist minister in the Bay Area with a focus in Africana studies and womanist theology. Her ministry is centered on liberation with an intersectional approach, and she is passionately involved in collectively organizing toward black liberation. What both of these women have in common is their vision for change, their living resistance as youth leaders, and their answers to state-sponsored violence from the United States to Palestine.

We are at a precipice in our struggle for collective liberation: FOSNA and our partners are honored to engage with two prophetic speakers, joined together on a singular speaking platform for a 2017 U.S. tour. Today it is more crucial than ever to join our unique and varied talents, gifts, and voices and demand accountability from the oppressors and visibility for the oppressed. We are called through faith and action to counter these complex systems of oppression that plague us all.

In Amanda's words: "It is imperative that in this moment we listen with full heart and sound mind to the stories of the human suffering that our sisters, brothers, and siblings are experiencing both here at home and in Palestine...and act for liberation."

Please help FOSNA bring Ahed (top photo) and Amanda (bottom photo) to your community. Answer the call for change and submit your donations here: https://fosna.nationbuilder.com/child_detention



Alternative Pilgrimage/Witness Trip

Information & Registration: <http://www.Impeacecenter.org/events/>

Lightline Pilgrimages N.A.

A Peacemaker's Pilgrimage to the Holy Land

with
The Rev. Richard Blackburn
Executive Director, Lombard Mennonite Peace Center

January 11 - 22, 2017

ISSUE 74, SUMMER 2016

CORNERSTONE

A PUBLICATION BY LABEL: ECONOMIC LIBERATION IN BIDDING CITIES

To Set the Captives Free

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Courage to Change Direction

"When John the Baptist lived in prison about Christ's works, he was sure of his discipline to him. 'Tell us,' they asked Jesus, 'see you the one John said was going to come, or should we expect someone else?' Jesus answered, 'Go back and tell John what you are hearing and seeing: the blind can see, the lame can walk, those who suffer from distorted skin become as made clean, the deaf hear, the dead are brought back to life, and the Good News is preached in the town.'" Matthew 11:2-6

Read it at fosna.org

FOSNA's New Growth



FOSNA's next generation of leaders in grassroots mobilization are debating liberation theology, starting a young seminarians working group, and organizing municipal boycott campaigns and tours like Right to Education and Stop Child Detention.



Ahad Tamimi & youth leading the village of Nabi Saleh

Liberation Theology—Strong theological arguments are critical to confronting Christian Zionism. In 2016 FOSNA sponsored a major conference on the intersectionality of liberative theologies. We will build on this effort in 2017.

FOSNA Conferences—Education for lifting the call of Palestinian Christians and struggling against Israeli military occupation.

FROM: Your Development Team—
Kali, Elaine, Ashleigh & Tarek
TO: You, Faithful Supporters
RE: FOSNA's 20th Anniversary!



We hope you are excited about how much we have accomplished these past 20 years and how much more we are planning to do in 2017 and beyond. Help us at this special historical moment to commemorate 20 years of Palestinian Liberation Theology by investing in **FOSNA's New Growth**. Please consider an increased gift this year or join our **Circle of Friends** by donating \$500 or more.

PLEASE DONATE AT FOSNA.org

**Or use the enclosed envelope.
Your donation supports:**

No Child Behind Bars Speaking Tour—with Ahd Tamimi and Amanda Weatherspoon (see p. 6).

Municipal BDS Campaigns—City divestment resolutions boycotting G4S in Sacramento, Denver, Tucson, and Pittsburgh.

Palestinian Voices at Denominational Summits—On-the-ground support for divestment resolutions at denominational general conferences held in 2016: the Methodist General Conference, the Presbyterian General Assembly, and the Unitarian Universalist General Assembly. In 2017 we anticipate three additional denominational divestment votes.

FOSNA Internship Program—for students who have been to Palestine a stipend is provided; for those who have not, a free witness trip after an academic year of service.

Praxis Seminary Working Group—for the next generation of Christian leaders (seminary students, young clergy, and seminary faculty), providing support and resources for them to become active supporters of the BDS movement.

Witness Trips—"Come and see" is a primary mandate of full and intentional witness in Palestine. We continue to improve witness trips by recruiting influential participants, assisting participants in producing useful videos and blogs during trips, and supporting them in sharing their experience once returning home.

fosna.org

Left to right:

Sharone
Darrel
Kali
Raphael
Katie
Elaine
Melissa
Celia
Osama





March 7 through March 13, 2017—Information & Registration at sabeel.org

Jesus Christ Liberator – Then and Now

Facing the Legacy of Injustice



Join Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center for its
10TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Tuesday, March 7 to Sunday, March 13, 2017
Bethlehem, Palestine / Jerusalem, Israel.

Apply Now

2017

At a major crossroad of pressing issues,
the conference will address:
The Legacy of Arthur Balfour
The Threat of Religious Extremism
Jesus Christ the Liberator

Register today at www.sabeel.org