

Synodical Resources

1. Worship and Study Materials

Worship and study materials are downloadable by clicking on the following links:

Jerusalem Study Guide: <http://www.elca.org/Our-Faith-In-Action/Justice/Peace-Not-Walls/Resources/Presentations.aspx>.

Lenten Resource for worship and reflection:

<http://images.acswebnetworks.com/1/498/HolyLentHolyLandHolyPeople.doc>

2. Speakers

The following speakers are available to visit your congregation or organization.

- ❖ *Tammie Danielsen* on the topic of “Lutheran ministries and congregations in the Holy Land” and how to help them. (Contact: tammiedanielsen@yahoo.com)
- ❖ Dr. Carol Gaskamp PhD RN on the topic of “Health, Peace and Justice”, in which she explores connections between peace, justice, and health, and health care delivery issues in the West Bank. (Contact: cdgaskamp@att.net)
- ❖ Rev. Ann Helmke on the topic of “The Role of the American churches in the Holy Land” -- both the complicities and the opportunities. Specific topics within this theme include the current context of the Conflict between Israel & Palestine, the impact of Christian Zionism on the Conflict, positives actions within the Church, and facilitation of potential actions among participants. (Contact: annhelmke@justice.com)
- ❖ Rev. Dr. Carolyn Schneider on the topic of "Accompanying Palestinians and Israelis in Search of a Just Peace in the Holy Land", in which she shares her experiences participating in the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel and working with Bishop Munib Younan of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jordan and the Holy Land between July 2005 and January 2006. (Contact: cschneider@tlu.edu)
- ❖ Rev. Sharon Wiggins on the topic of “Walls that Unite and Walls that Divide,” an introduction to the Separation Wall on the West Bank and it's effect on the lives of our brothers and sisters in its path, or on “Pilgrimage to the Holy Land--Living Stones and Dead Stones: What makes a land holy?” (Contact: pastorwiggins@awesomenet.net)

3. Books and Videos

The following items can be borrowed from the Southwestern Texas Synod's Resource Center.

Books

1. Alternative Tourism Group. *Palestine and Palestinians: A Guidebook*. 1st Edition. Ramallah: ATG, 2005.

Notes by Rev. Sharon Wiggins: The Alternative Tourism Group was begun as a project of the Lutheran School in Beit Sahour as a way to provide jobs and bring some of the tourist dollars to the West Bank. It is still housed on the property of the Lutheran School but has developed an independent identity. They connect tourists with families in Beit Sahour who will provide Bed and Breakfast facilities and act as host families to visitors offering the gracious hospitality for which Palestinians are so well known. They also helping finding drivers and guides for those who wish to plan their own trip. This book is chock-full of very interesting information including background histories and cultural notes and is obviously a very detailed work of love.

2. Chacour, Elias, with David Hazard. *Blood Brothers*. Grand Rapids: Chosen Books of the Zondervan Corporation, 1984.

Notes by Rev. Sharon Wiggins: Father Chacour tells the story of his family being driven out of their home, the attempts to return, and the destruction of the village when finally the people got legal permission to return home, only to witness the physical destruction of the village and their homes before their very eyes. It is also his story as he grows up facing many obstacles and discriminations that turned many bitter and his decision not to go that route. This is a very riveting, well-written book. It should be easy to read, but is not because it is so hard to hear the story knowing it is true. The graciousness of the man who tells the story makes it worth reading and can be an inspiration to those trying to find where God is in all we see around us today. The Blood Brothers he is referring to are Christians and Jews, which is why the treatment at the hands of the Israelis was sometimes so hard to understand.

3. Chacour, Elias, with Mary E. Jensen. *We Belong to the Land: The Story of a Palestinian Israeli Who Lives for Peace and Reconciliation*. Notre Dame: The University of Notre Dame Press, 2001.

Notes by Rev. Sharon Wiggins: This is a series of stories from Chacour's life and work. They are much easier to read than *Blood Brothers* perhaps because they are at a later time in his life when his peace is more deeply rooted and the pains are not as great. Also, he does not speak directly of the most painful times except in one story of his father's reliving the pain near his death. This book might be a better entry point into learning about the trials and tribulations faced by Christians as well as Muslims in Israel. The chapter on the meaning of *blessed* in the Sermon on the Mount is extremely interesting. The chapter on taking off shoes at the airport is very informative.

4. Raheb, Mitri. *Bethlehem Besieged: Stories of Hope in Times of Trouble*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2004.

Notes by Rev. Sharon Wiggins: This book is an anecdotal account of the Israeli invasion of Bethlehem in 2002 and the attack on the Christmas Lutheran Church and compound, destruction of equipment, and occupation of the facilities. Raheb tells of life under curfews and hope in the face of oppression. Raheb is the pastor of the church and instrumental in its development and that of the Dar al-Kalima Lutheran School in Bethlehem.

5. Raheb, Mitri. *I Am A Palestinian Christian*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995.

Notes by Dr. Carolyn Schneider: Mitri Raheb is the pastor of Christmas Lutheran Church in Bethlehem. In this, his first book, he takes the readers on a journey that is both personal and communal. After providing some history into the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Raheb turns to theology. He writes of growing up Christian in Palestine, and learning the stories of Abraham, Moses, and Joshua from the Bible, only to realize as an adult how these stories were being used to give divine sanction to the oppression of his own people. He wrestled with the Bible until it yielded the blessing of a new hermeneutic, one based on the idea that the crucified Lord is the center of the scriptures and the lens through which the whole of the scriptures should be read. He

then puts this lens to work in examining biblical texts relating to the promise of land, to the election of a people, to the parables of Jesus, and more, so that they take on life-giving meaning.

- 6.** Rossing, Barbara. *The Rapture Exposed: The Message of Hope in the Book of Revelation*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2004.

Notes by Dr. Carolyn Schneider: Rossing teaches New Testament at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago and is an ordained pastor of the ELCA. In this book, she provides insight into the hidden messages of the Book of Revelation by which John pulls his hearers back to the stories of the scriptures: the Exodus from slavery and the words of the prophets to an exiled people. The message is that God will overcome evil, not by means of violence but by means of "Lamb Power," the power of Jesus Christ, who saves and heals with his own life and blood. Rossing's goal is to replace the violent "rapture theology" exemplified in the *Left Behind* series and in the teachings of John Hagee and others.

- 7.** Tolan, Sandy. *The Lemon Tree: An Arab, A Jew, and the Heart of the Middle East*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2006.

Notes by Rev. Sharon Wiggins: Sandy Tolan first told the heart of this story on *Fresh Air* ten years ago. Since that time he has researched and elaborated the circumstances of both families who have lived in the house which is now a Day Care Center dedicated to promoting peace and understanding. This book traces the history of the families and the house through several generations to show how the situation got to be what it is today. The careful research and use of well documented quotes from leading figures in the recent history of the area intertwined with the stories of the two families give a very good picture of the problem now facing the people in a places some call Israel, some call Palestine, and all call home. 98 of 362 pages are devoted to footnotes, bibliography of sources, acknowledgements, and an index. This is not really light reading, mostly because it is not a light subject. But it is relatively easy reading. The depth of information and two-sided approach is well worth any effort it requires. Sandy Tolan is widely published, has produced numerous documentaries for National Public Radio and Public Radio International, served as oral history consultant to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and directs the Project on International Reporting at UC–Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism.

- 8.** Younan, Munib. *Witnessing for Peace: In Jerusalem and the World*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003.

Notes by Dr. Carolyn Schneider: As Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jordan and the Holy Land, Munib Younan carries a heavy responsibility. He writes of Jesus' words to his first disciples, "You will be my witnesses beginning in Jerusalem" (Acts 1:8), and shows how the Christian church has been a witness in Jerusalem every since. It is his witness to Christ that brings Younan to the dialogue table repeatedly to try to bring about reconciliation between Jews, Christians, and Muslims, all caught in the middle of a political struggle over land. We hear stories of how these efforts to make peace spill out into the streets of the market, into the prison cell of a terrorist, into the homes of "the other," and into all places of daily life.

Notes by Rev. Sharon Wiggins: Bishop Younan's writing is much more politically and historically-oriented than the writing of Pastor Raheb and at the same time more theological. He discusses the difference between a political view of land and the theology of land. He also talks about how the church should be a witness, and about the relationship between politics and religion.

Videos

1. *The Iron Wall*, a film by Mohammed Alatar. Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committees, 2006. 58 minutes. DVD. Color. Not rated.

Notes by Rev. Sharon Wiggins and Dr. Carolyn Schneider: This is a documentary on the settlements that are being built throughout the West Bank. It features many different voices from Israel and the West Bank. It is very informative. It is recommended by former President Carter in his book, *Peace not Apartheid*.

2. *Mosaic: A Video Magazine of the ELCA*. VHS.

November 1988 segment, "Holy Land: Land of Fear, Land of Hope"

March 1989 segment, "Keeping Peace in the Sinai"

Fall 1999 segments, "Healing in a Holy Land: Augusta Victoria Hospital," "Dreams of the Future: Educating Palestine," and "Christians of the Pentecost: Our New Arab Neighbors"

Notes by Dr. Carol Gaskamp: These all provide information about the complex historical, political, and religious factors contributing to the ongoing Israel-Palestinian conflict.

3. *Promises*, a film by Justine Shapiro, B.Z. Goldberg, and Carlos Bolado. The Promises Film Project, 2001/New Yorker Films Artwork, 2004. 102 minutes. DVD. Color.

Review from the DVD jacket: A beautiful and deeply moving portrait of seven Palestinian and Israeli children, *Promises* follows the journey of a filmmaker who meets these children in and around Jerusalem, from a Palestinian refugee camp to an Israeli settlement in the West Bank. Although they live only 20 minutes apart, these children exist in completely separate worlds, divided by physical, historical, and emotional boundaries. *Promises* explores the nature of these boundaries and tells the story of a few children who dared to cross the lines to meet their neighbors. The children of *Promises* offer refreshing, personal and sometimes humorous insight into the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. With remarkable balance and a compelling blend of pathos and humor, this Oscar-nominated, Emmy Award winning film moves the conflict out of politics and into the realm of the human.

4. *Salt of the Earth: Palestinian Christians in the Northern West Bank*, a documentary by Marthame and Elizabeth Sanders. Salt Films, Inc., 2005. www.satfilms.net. DVD.

Notes from DVD jacket: Living as religious minorities in turbulent times, nine Palestinian Christians share their faith, hopes, and challenges in this series of documentary short films. An accompanying study guide for Sunday schools, Bible Studies, and small groups is available for download at www.saltfilms.net.

Notes by Rev. Sharon Wiggins: This DVD consists of several short, self-contained segments, each with study questions. The segments can be selected for the time of the church year or other areas of particular interest. Seeing people at worship under very trying circumstances breathes a new sense of life into passages we have heard many times before. It ends with a message to the viewers from each of the main people in the vignettes.

5. *Through My Eyes*. Division for Global Mission, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2000. VHS.

Notes from the VHS jacket: A story of two young-adult women, one American, Hmong Ly, and the other Palestinian, Louna Tanous, and their encounters in Palestine in the year 2000. Includes discussion questions on the jacket cover.

6. *Walking the Path Jesus Walked: Historic Christian Churches Continue to Live Out Their Faith in the Middle East.* Mennonite Central Committee, 2003. 24 minutes. DVD. For grades 12 to adult.

Notes from DVD jacket: The Middle East has given birth to three major religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Although the Arab nations are predominantly Muslim, Israel and Palestine are home to both Jewish and Christian communities as well. In a region plagued by conflict, Christians of the Middle East feel forgotten and increasingly isolated. In this video, Christians from Egypt, Palestine, and Syria talk about their lives and their faith communities, many of which follow traditions that stretch back to the time of Christ. Christians talk about how their faith calls them to model Jesus Christ. They describe speaking out against – and resisting – injustice nonviolently, as well as relating to people of other faiths in a peaceful manner. Discussion guide included.