



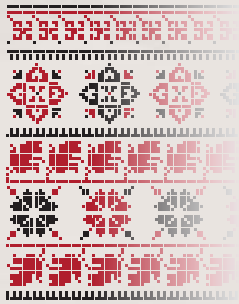
AFEDJ

American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem

Bearing Witness

A Journey with Holy Land Christians

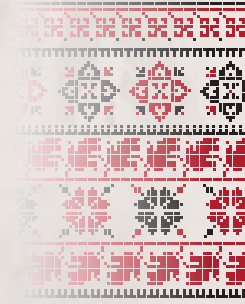
PARTICIPANT PROGRAM GUIDE



 **AFEDJ**
American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem

Bearing Witness

A Journey with Holy Land Christians



CONTENTS

Introduction	p. 01
About <i>Bearing Witness</i>	p. 03
Overview	
Your Facilitator's Responsibilities	
Your Responsibilities as a Participant	
Learning Resources	p. 06
The Participant Session Guides	
Pre-Work Materials	
Resources for Further Study	
Participating in Bearing Witness	p.07
On-Board Activity	
Guidelines for Scripture Study	
Video Reflection Questions	
Group Work and Learning	p. 08
Creating Group Norms	
Holy Listening	
Helpful Websites	p. 10

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Introduction

Palestinian Christians are part of the unbroken Christian presence in the land of Jesus going back to the first church. Theirs is a journey of humanity in pursuit of dignity, justice, and peace. Sadly, the story and very existence of our siblings in Christ in the Holy Land has been ignored or forgotten by most. *Bearing Witness* provides an opportunity to learn about this often-neglected part of Christendom.

All Christians are called to listen and learn from the small, dwindling Christian community who live, worship, and minister in the place where Jesus taught and ministered. They bear witness to Jesus today in a region of conflict, brokenness, and distrust. Today, Christians are only 1 percent of the population of Palestine – The West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem – and 2 percent of the population of the state of Israel. Yet, through their resilience and their humanitarian outreach to people of all religions, ethnicities, and economic circumstances, they have outsized influence in advancing peace and reconciliation in this volatile part of the world.

While the Christian presence in the Holy Land extends back to the first Pentecost, the Anglican Church has borne witness to Jesus in the Middle East since the middle of the nineteenth century. The Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem today includes twenty-seven parishes and thirty humanitarian institutions – schools, hospitals, and centers for children with disabilities – in Palestine, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. Christians of all denominations have a responsibility to hold up the work of our Anglican sisters and brothers in the Diocese of Jerusalem. Their churches and humanitarian ministries are living out God’s expectations for the Holy Land, while operating in the basest human conditions.



Archbishop Hosam Naoum and the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem uphold the historic Arab Christian presence in the Holy Land at great financial and personal cost. Archbishop Hosam reminds us, “We do this not for ourselves. We do this on behalf of every Christian in the world.” He’s also clear that the diocese’s witness in the Holy Land needs our help. “This is not something we could ever do alone. Our partnership depends on the entire body of Christ. We are witnesses together of Christ’s example of love and reconciliation in the Holy Land, a place that needs many prayers and much support.”

Bearing Witness provides you the biblical basis, the inspiration, and the tools to walk together with Christians in the Holy Land. This program is an invitation for you to be transformed. It will inspire you and your group to seek ways to connect with and support the courageous ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem and their witness to Jesus in the land where he lived, died, and was resurrected.

The core of the program is professionally produced videos shot on location in the West Bank, Gaza, Jerusalem, and Israel. These videos bring the places Jesus lived and ministered alive. They capture the diverse voices and perspectives of the people of the Holy Land today – Christians, Jews and Muslims, Palestinians living in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza, and Arab and Jewish citizens of Israel.

Bearing Witness is developed by the American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem (AFEDJ), a non-political, independent non-profit organization that raises awareness in the United States about the powerful Christian witness of the Diocese of Jerusalem and raises funds in support of the diocese’s humanitarian institutions. AFEDJ’s partners in program development are the Episcopal Church’s Standing Commission on World Mission and Jerusalem Peacebuilders, a Christian ministry of interfaith reconciliation whose programs focus on uniting Israelis, Palestinians, and Americans and providing them with the opportunities, relationships, and skills they need to become future leaders for peace in the global community. We are grateful for the generous support of the Episcopal Church’s Constable Fund for financial support of this program’s development as well as generous individual donors.

About **Bearing Witness**

One of *Bearing Witness*'s core objectives is to address the 17 resolutions approved by the Episcopal Church's General Convention that call us to learn about the Holy Land and to:

- Walk where Jesus walked and gain greater biblical insights on Jesus' transformative ministries
- Deepen our understanding of the significance of the Holy Land to the Abrahamic faiths
- Raise awareness of the inspiring and powerful Christian witness demonstrated by the community of Palestinian Anglicans in the region
- Gain insight into one of our world's most vexing struggles for peace and justice and build our capacity to draw informed and fair conclusions regarding present and future realities in the region
- Understand the conditions that necessitate the humanitarian response of serving all who live in the region and strive for a life of security, dignity, and freedom for all
- Commit to concrete actions and advocacy that will sustain our engagement in a mission of helping to bring understanding, healing, and reconciliation to the people in the Holy Land and to our own communities

These are ambitious and will require your deep engagement. When we choose to engage with a difficult and complex set of issues, the temptation is to manage it intellectually. The human instinct is to tackle difficult and uncomfortable issues with words. Most study experiences have a way of disarming fraught subjects through conversation about it. *Bearing Witness* aspires to create an experience for you that is more than that.

***Bearing Witness* Overview**

All of the *Bearing Witness* materials are available online at www.afedj.org/bearingwitness. The heart of *Bearing Witness* is 14 videos that were filmed on location in Palestine and Israel. In addition, we provide a wide range of resources and guides for you and your facilitator. Most of these are downloadable PDF's. We also provide links to articles and videos for further study that we have selected. Any individual can view the videos and read the materials. However, *Bearing Witness* is designed to be a group learning experience with a trained facilitator. By coalescing as a group, together you will be inspired to act on behalf of the Diocese of Jerusalem institutions, engage in AFEDJ's mission, and find ways to extend the mission in your own community.

The 5-session program is grounded in scripture readings focused on themes of Jesus' ministry:

SESSION 1 **Belonging** (*Luke 4:14-21*)

As with Jesus, understanding and claiming our identity is important to our well-being. In Israel and Palestine, one's identity and sense of belonging is often in conflict with the region or community in which one lives.

SESSION 2 **Healing** (*Luke 8:43-48*)

Jesus shows His compassion as a healer who turned away no one who asked for His help. The leaders and staff at the Diocese of Jerusalem hospitals show the same care to the most vulnerable in Gaza and the West Bank.

SESSION 3 **Teaching** (*Matthew 13:31-32*)

Jesus taught the marginalized and outcasts. He taught us to love everyone and to help one another. The Diocese of Jerusalem's schools are grounded in Christian values of love, service to others, and justice for all. Students in Diocese of Jerusalem schools grow into confident, compassionate leaders of the future.

SESSION 4 **Breaking Barriers** (*Luke 17:11-19*)

Jesus broke down ethnic, religious, gender, and socioeconomic barriers throughout his ministry. Today, Palestinians face discrimination and obstacles to leading productive lives, especially those with disabilities. Diocese of Jerusalem rehabilitation centers and schools help families overcome the stigma of disabilities and provide expert care and inclusive education to empower children to reach their potential.

SESSION 5 **Building Hope** (*John 14:12-14*)

Palestinians face challenges and discrimination in employment, education, housing, economic opportunity, and almost every facet of their lives. As disciples of Christ, the Diocese of Jerusalem clergy and leaders of humanitarian institutions bring healing, hope, and empowerment to all who live in the Holy Land.

There are five parts to each 90-minute group study session of *Bearing Witness*. Your facilitator will lead you through each:

- 1. Welcome.** An opening prayer, introduction to the session, and an activity to engage all participants
- 2. Jesus' Ministry.** A scripture study based on a Gospel passage, including a video reflection by a Palestinian or American priest or bishop
- 3. The Realities of Life in Palestine and Israel.** The historical, political, social, and economic contexts in different cities and regions of Israel and Palestine that create the need for a Christian response, including video interviews with ministry leaders
- 4. The Christian Witness of the Diocese of Jerusalem.** One or two Diocese of Jerusalem ministries (hospitals, schools, rehabilitation centers) that respond to these needs, including video interviews with leaders of these current-day expressions of Jesus' ministry.
- 5. Invitation to Engage.** Examples of U.S. church communities that have established enduring partnerships with the Diocese of Jerusalem, including interviews with church program leaders and tools for planning your own engagement.

Your Facilitator's Responsibilities

The facilitator's role is to provide an environment of hospitality and safety so that all can participate comfortably. Your facilitator has received training and additional resources to lead your group and encourage an active response that goes beyond discussion, beyond mere comprehension, into an experience that will bring you and other participants into closer communion with the Gospel and the people of the Holy Land. He or she is not the "teacher" per se, but a companion to you and your group as together you learn and discover what it means to "bear witness" about the Good News of Jesus Christ and how the Diocese of Jerusalem exemplifies the ongoing ministry of Jesus in the Holy Land today.

Your Responsibilities as a Participant

Each of the five *Bearing Witness* sessions is designed to last 90 minutes. It is important that you can make the commitment of this time every session. In each of your Participant Session Guides there is required "pre-work" for you to do before the session that will be between 45 minutes and an hour for every session, providing you some background on the topic and region of the session.

As your group comes together to learn about the Holy Land, we hope that you will not experience it as a short-term study, but one that becomes a life-long commitment toward working for a more hopeful and just society in your local community and beyond.

Learning Resources

All of the program resources are delivered online. On the *Bearing Witness* website, you will find the following downloadable or linked materials for each session:

- **Participant Session Guides.** Each of the five session guides provide you with the scripture reading, prayers, reflection prompts, and pre-session resources – curated articles and videos to provide background on each session’s location. Additional curated resources are also offered that you may personally wish to watch or read to “go deeper” into the session’s theme.
- **Getting to Know the Holy Land.** These six documents provide background on the cities and regions where the featured Diocese of Jerusalem institutions are located and the videos were filmed: Jerusalem; Nazareth, Israel; Ramallah, the West Bank; Jordan, and Gaza. The sixth “Getting to Know” is about the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem. They include maps, regional history, and information that will help you understand daily life in Palestine and Israel. These should be read prior to each session.
- **Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem Ministries.** These three documents provide background on the Diocese of Jerusalem’s key areas of ministry - healing (hospitals), teaching (schools), and breaking barriers (rehabilitation centers).

The Participant Session Guides

As noted above, you will have access to a Participant Session Guide for each session. These guides provide ways for you to share in your group’s work together (such as leading prayer or reading scripture) and help you prepare for each 90-minute session. You may choose to download these for adding personal notes or view them on a tablet or other device during the session. You are also encouraged to have a notebook or personal journal to write in.

Pre-Work Materials

Each session includes “pre-work” that you are expected to complete before each session. These include Getting to Know the Holy Land and Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem Ministries as noted previously. In addition, we provide links to articles and videos that offer you a deeper look into the history of the Holy Land and its people and the realities of life in the region today for Muslims, Jews, and Christians. These will provide context to the lives of the leaders, staff, and beneficiaries of each Diocese of Jerusalem institution and help you understand the conditions that call for a Christian response to humanitarian needs.



Resources for Further Study

The *Bearing Witness* team has selected articles and videos about the history of the region, the Israel/Palestinian conflict, the Abrahamic faiths, and stories told by inhabitants of Palestine and Israel about their struggles and achievements. These are optional resources for those who wish to “go deeper” in their learning.

Participating In *Bearing Witness*

On-Board Activity

As you begin each session, your facilitator will offer a question to the group as an icebreaker activity.

Guidelines for Scripture Study

Each session of *Bearing Witness* offers scripture for reflection related to the theme of the session. This Bible study offers a means for personal reflection and group insights that will be helpful as the group prepares to watch and discuss the session's videos. *Discipleship Based Bible Study*¹ is offered to fit the 90-minute time frame of each session. This form of Bible study was developed as part of *A Disciple's Prayer Book*, written by Native Episcopalians in collaboration with The Episcopal Church's Office of Indigenous Ministries. It was created to be used on The Episcopal Church's journey together toward becoming a church of disciples in mission to all of God's creation. Of course, there are other Bible study approaches your facilitator may wish to use.

DISCIPLESHIP BASED BIBLE STUDY

1. Read the scripture passage aloud.
2. What word(s), idea(s), or sentence(s) stand out for you in the Gospel passage?
3. Invite another person to reread the passage.
4. What is Jesus (the Gospel) saying to you?
5. Invite another person to reread the passage.
6. What is Jesus (the Gospel) calling you to do?

VIDEO REFLECTION QUESTIONS

After watching each of the session's videos, there is a time for group or personal reflection. The questions below can be a starting point for personal thoughts or group discussion for any of the sessions.

1. Where is your story in this story?
2. Where do you see God?
3. What causes you to pause and rethink your previous assumptions?
4. What cries out to you?
5. What calls to you?
6. What did you hear that you will remember in five years?

¹ https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/01/indigenous_disciples_prayer_book_eng.pdf

Group Work and Learning

Creating Group Norms

Bearing Witness offers stories that you may not have heard before. You may be coming to the program with understandings and opinions that differ from others regarding Israel and Palestine. According to Eric Law of the Kaleidoscope Institute, “Communication is one of the most important elements in building a more inclusive community. People of different backgrounds bring with them different communication styles. Sometimes these differences can cause conflicts among members of a community – often in an unconscious way.”²

During your first session, your facilitator will lead you in a process to develop group norms. These can be a list of agreed upon “rules” for everyone to abide by during each of the sessions such as: We will start on time; use “I” statements; turn off cell phones; keep confidentiality; hold back if I talk a lot; embrace silence; etc.

Eric Law has developed these communication guidelines your group may choose to follow or build upon for your own use:

Respectful Communication Guidelines

R = take **RESPONSIBILITY** for what you say and feel without blaming others.

E = use **EMPATHETIC** listening.

S = be **SENSITIVE** to differences of communication styles.

P = **PONDER** what you hear and feel before you speak.

E = **EXAMINE** your own assumptions and perceptions.

C = keep **CONFIDENTIALITY**

T = **TRUST** ambiguity because we are not here to debate who is right or wrong.

Holy Listening

There are several models for creating an environment for open discussion. Parker Palmer’s “circles of trust” as explored in *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994) is “a space between us that honors the soul.” He shows how people in settings ranging from friendship to organizational life can support each other on the journey toward living “divided no more.”

Eric H. F. Law has a wonderful technique for active listening in his work, *The Wolf Shall Dwell With the Lamb* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1993) called “Mutual Invitation.”³ The technique is presented as a tool for multicultural conversation and dialogue, but it is valuable for any number of settings and circumstances, so it is recommended that groups using *Bearing Witness* follow the practice during all group discussions. This can be used during introductions or when posing a reflection question following a video for discussion. The facilitator’s role in a group setting also includes providing an environment in which all have an opportunity to share their thoughts if desired. Some groups have individuals who can dominate or always speak first, and this method gives everyone a chance to be heard, having the full attention of the group with everyone practicing active listening.

² <https://www.kscopeinstitute.org/free-resources>

Mutual Invitation

The process is a discipline for a group that allows everyone to share the responsibility of making sure everyone's voice is heard. This creates a space for everyone to be able to speak and one person does not dominate or always talk first. It also takes away the "go around the circle" process which can be anxiety-producing for some. Be patient with one another. Allow time between invitations to hear what has been said. A person may wish to pass on speaking, but no one should be allowed to pass on inviting. No one should invite for another.

1. The facilitator or a designated person will share first. After that person has spoken, they then invite another to share. Whom you invite does not need to be the person next to you.
2. After the next person has spoken, that person is given the privilege to invite another to share.
3. If that person is not ready to share yet, they say, "I pass for now" and they will invite another person (with an opportunity to share later). If they don't want to say anything at all, they simply say "pass" and proceed to invite another to share.
4. This is done until everyone has been invited.
5. Invite everyone to listen and not to respond to someone's sharing immediately. There will be a time to respond and to ask clarifying questions after everyone has had an opportunity to share.

Framing Your Engagement

In any group discussion, sometimes the topic goes off course or just a few are engaged in a conversation. Before responding to someone else's statement or disagreeing, think about these possibilities that honor your own self as well as others.

- Am I honoring my own experience as valid, or am I feeling defensive about it?
- Can I trust others to respect our differences, or do I suspect others of trying to force me to change?
- Can I trust myself to see that there is value in someone's counter idea and keep my integrity, without feeling I am weak or wishy-washy?
- Am I willing to open myself to the pain of others and my own, or am I resisting all pain, not realizing that I have the strength to face the pain?
- Am I open to seeing Christ in all others, or do I view others as "the enemy"?
- Remember that each person has a piece of the truth, so we listen to each other to hear if someone else's truth is congruent with ours or adds to ours.
- We dialogue with each other; we do not debate. When we dialogue, everybody wins. In a debate there must be a winner and a loser.
- Each person's opinion is valuable, and we honor it as being true for them. There is a chance it might inform our opinion. So, keep an open mind.

Helpful Websites

We recommend the following websites as reliable, relatively balanced resources that can deepen your understanding of the Holy Land. For concepts or words that may be unfamiliar, Wikipedia is recommended.

EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF JERUSALEM

Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem	https://j-diocese.org/wordpress/
American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem	https://afedj.org
The Jerusalem Princess Basma Center	https://www.basma-centre.org

MIDDLE EAST NEWS AND ANALYSIS

AL-Monitor	https://www.al-monitor.com/
Foundation for Middle East Peace	https://fmep.org/
UCLA Younes & Soraya Nazarian Center for Israel Studies	https://www.international.ucla.edu/israel/home

TIMELINES

Al Jazeera / Palestine Remix	https://interactive.aljazeera.com/aje/PalestineRemix/timeline_main.html
Balfour Project	https://balfourproject.org/a-timeline/

MAPS

Al Jazeera Remix	https://remix.aljazeera.com/aje/PalestineRemix/maps_main.html
Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA) (Jerusalem)	http://passia.org/maps/37?page=2
PASSIA (Palestinian camps, water, annexation of land)	http://passia.org/maps/39
PASSIA (West Bank & Gaza Maps)	http://passia.org/maps/38?page=4

TERMINOLOGY

PASSIA	http://www.passia.org/terms/
Vox	https://www.vox.com/2018/11/20/18079996/israel-palestine-conflict-guide-explainer

While each Participant Session Guide will have all of what you need to participate in a session, you may wish to refer back to portions of this Program Guide as your group becomes a community and digs deep into the program.