



AFEDJ

American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem

Bearing Witness

A Journey with Holy Land Christians

SESSION 1:

Belonging

FACILITATOR SESSION GUIDE

Preparing For The Session

GOALS:

- Gain a basic understanding of the founding of the State of Israel and the history of conflict between Israel and Palestine since World War II
- Discuss the importance of claiming one's identity
- Learn about the mission of the Diocese of Jerusalem and its clergy and humanitarian institution leaders
- Understand the impact conflict and occupation has had on the residents of Palestine and Israel

Objectives: The ability to....

- Connect the story of Jesus speaking in the synagogue in Nazareth with his sense of identity and home and share one's own identity with the group
- Appreciate the complexity of people's identities in the region known as the Holy Land based on religion, nationality, ethnicity, and culture
- Appreciate the sense of isolation and separation those of various identities experience across the region

Content Review

Get ready to lead Session 1: Belonging

Read and make notes about these documents:

PDF

- GETTING TO KNOW THE HOLY LAND:
The Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem
- PARTICIPANT SESSION GUIDE: **Session 1: Belonging**

Watch and make notes about these videos:

Video

- **Conflict in Israel and Palestine: Crash Course World History 223**
<<https://youtu.be/two2TLIMhiw>>
This video by well-known You Tube "Crash Course" historian John Green is a fast-paced overview of the conflict starting in the late 19th century. Green speaks really quickly. He oversimplifies in places yet provides an accurate and relatively balanced account. He's irreverent when speaking about American presidents, which might offend some.
- **The Dual Narrative**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kUxrqGQB7_8
A short, animated video, created by an Israeli, that discusses the dual narrative, or how Israelis and Palestinians view their conflict differently.
- **Introduction to *Bearing Witness***
- SESSION 1: BELONGING **Gospel Reflection**
- SESSION 1: BELONGING **Belonging and Identity**

Several Days before the Session

- Send participants an email reminder for the upcoming first session.
- If necessary, share links and a reminder of the pre-work for Session 1 to be done before the session. Encourage participants to bring a digital or printed copy of their Session Guide.

Session 1 Participant Pre-Work

PDF

PARTICIPANT SESSION GUIDE: **Session 1: Belonging**

GETTING TO KNOW THE HOLY LAND: **The Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem**

Videos

- **Introduction to *Bearing Witness***
- **Conflict in Israel and Palestine: Crash Course World History 223**
<https://youtu.be/1wo2TLIMhiw>
- **The Dual Narrative**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kUxrqGQB7_8

SUPPLIES

- name tags
- markers
- tape
- easel with newsprint or whiteboard
- R.E.S.P.E.C.T. (Respectful Communications Guidelines) newsprint
- laptop / projector / speakers or amplification system / TV or screen
- refreshments (if provided)

Day of Session

- Gather needed supplies.
- Set up the room.
- Post the R.E.S.P.E.C.T. (Respectful Communication Guidelines) so they are visible to all participants.
- Tee-up all videos on your laptop or other device so that they will be ready to play at the proper time. Test all your equipment in advance to make sure everything is working, including the sound.

Session 1 Background

The *Bearing Witness* program educates participants about the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem and the Holy Land and takes them on a spiritual journey. This first session creates a foundation for the entire program. The session connects the story of Jesus speaking in the synagogue where he claims his identity (Luke 4:14-21) with the often complex identities of people living in the Holy Land today.

Participants most likely will have different understandings of the social, political, economic, educational, and religious contexts of life in the Holy Land, especially in Israel and the Palestinian Territories. As the facilitator, it is important that you have read and watched the pre-session materials well in advance. Participants will also be asked to do this. Be prepared for questions; refer to your Facilitator's Program Guide to assist you. You do not need to know all the answers. Wondering as a group about possible responses to a question is helpful. Consider asking participants to think about possible responses, jotting them down in a notebook for future study.

Identity is the unique set of characteristics that make a person who they are and that shape their personal story. Identity encompasses the memories, experiences, relationships, and values that create one's sense of self.

The writer David Brooks describes identity this way, "Most of us take the actual events of our lives, including the failures and frailties, and we gradually construct coherent narratives about who we are. Those autobiographical narratives are always being updated as time passes — and, of course, tend to be at least modestly self-flattering. But for most of us, the life narrative we tell both the world and ourselves gives us a stable sense of identity. It helps us name what we've learned from experience and what meaning our life holds. It helps us make our biggest decisions. As the philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre once observed, you can't know what to do unless you know what story you are a part of."¹

Everyone experiences the journey of forming an identity and a sense of belonging. We ask ourselves, 'Who am I?', 'Who do others want me to be?', 'Where do I belong?', 'Where do I fit in?' Anyone who has worked with children (and especially teens) knows that this is an important part of one's development emotionally, socially, and spiritually.

Belonging means to feel a sense of welcome and acceptance. Belonging is a need we naturally seek in order to feel loved. In the same manner as our identities, there are many forms of belonging: personal relationships, social groups, religious beliefs, ethnic and racial backgrounds, political affiliations, citizenship. If we fail to develop a sense of belonging, isolation and depression can often ensue.

Throughout our lives, our personal view of ourselves influences our decisions. In Israel and Palestine, one's identity and sense of belonging is often in conflict with the community one lives in. The videos in this session present a variety of individuals living in the Holy Land speaking about how they understand their identities and their sense of belonging.

¹ David Brooks, "The Sad Tales of George Santos", New York Times, December 28, 2022

Session 1: Belonging

SESSION OPENING

Opening Prayer (2 minutes)

O God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature: Grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, your Son Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. ("Collect for the Second Sunday after Christmas Day," BCP p. 214).

Ice-Breaker Activity (5 minutes)

Introduce and practice *Mutual Invitation* (refer to the Facilitator Program Guide for this process) by inviting all gathered to introduce themselves by sharing their name, where they were born, where they live now, how they identify themselves (this could be any number of ways – their choice). The facilitator should begin, setting the example

My name is XXX. I was born in XXX and currently live in XXX. I would identify myself as XXX. I have been a member of this community for XXX years. I would like XXX to share next.

Introduce *Bearing Witness* (10 minutes)

Begin:

All Christians believe that one mission of the church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ (BCP, 855). One way we can live this out is by bringing hope and healing to the Holy Land despite the struggles that so many of its residents – especially Palestinians – encounter in their day-to-day lives. Through the Diocese of Jerusalem and its many institutions, hope and empowerment are offered daily as a witness to the power of love given to us in Jesus Christ.

Introduce the video:

Video SESSION 1: BELONGING

Bearing Witness Program Introduction

Palestinian Christians are heirs to 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* will provide us with an opportunity to learn about this oft-neglected part of Christendom and the work of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem in addressing Palestinians' humanitarian needs.

1. Play the video.

2. Discussion prompts:

- What questions do you have about *Bearing Witness* as we start this program together?

Create Group Norms (10 minutes)

Introduce the concept of creating group norms. Refer to the Facilitator's Program Guide for more in-depth suggestions.

1. Post the *Respectful Communication Guidelines* you created on newsprint onto the easel for all to see.
2. Review each one, inviting a variety of participants to read aloud each statement, one at a time, asking the group what they believe each one means for creating a safe, welcoming, and hospitable group for the session and all future *Bearing Witness* sessions.
3. Ask if there are any questions or adaptations to be made, writing then down on the newsprint if all agree.

R = take **RESPONSIBILITY** for what you say and feel without blaming others
(*"I" statements*)

E = use **EMPATHETIC** listening
(*no problem solving or judging*)

S = be **SENSITIVE** to differences of communication styles
(*If you tend to always speak, put on the brakes and give room to those who may be hesitant to jump in*)

P = **PONDER** what you hear and feel before you speak
(*embrace the silence*)

E = **EXAMINE** your own assumptions and perceptions
(*try to avoid "insider" conversation or references*)

C = keep **CONFIDENTIALITY**
(*keep our "campfire" conversations to our group only; what happens around the campfire, stays around the campfire*)

T = **TRUST** ambiguity because we are not here to debate who is right or wrong
(*we are all here to learn and grow in our own ways, not to convince others of our beliefs or understandings*)

4. Remind the group that these will be reviewed at the beginning of each session and adjusted as needed by the group together.

Jesus' MINISTRY

Scripture Study***Facilitator Background Commentary***

The Gospel passage for Session One (Luke 4:14-21) marks the beginning of Jesus' ministry, after his baptism and his struggle in the wilderness. He returns home to Nazareth and enters what was most likely a very familiar place to him as a child and young adult. Villagers know who he is. At this moment, Jesus claims his identity as one who will transform their lives toward God and neighbor. And this challenges his community who question whether he belongs there anymore.

Luke is portraying Jesus as a faithful Jew, with his actions fulfilling his heritage, beginning with the fulfillment in God's covenant with Israel. Many of the themes from the scripture he read from Isaiah 61:1-2 are found in previous passages in Luke: "the song of Mary" (1:45-55) and "the song of Zechariah" (1:67-79). Here Luke echoes them again: the exaltation of the poor and lowly, the deliverance of those who are oppressed, the release of the captives.

Jesus tells all Christians exactly what we're called to do in our own homes/communities and by whose power it will be accomplished. Jesus declares he has been set apart for ministry and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, he is empowered to serve. The Diocese of Jerusalem's ministries bear witness to Jesus as they follow His example in their faithful work of bringing "good news to the poor, proclaiming release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, and to let the oppressed go free."

Discipleship Based Bible Study (10 minutes)

Lead Bible Study following *The Discipleship Based Bible Study*² method or another approach your group may prefer. Use *Mutual Invitation* for steps #5 and #7.

1. Invite participants to find Luke 4:14-21 in their Session 1 Participant Guide.
2. Read the scripture passage aloud.
3. What word(s), idea(s), or sentence(s) stand out to you in this Gospel passage?
4. Invite another person to reread the passage.
5. What is Jesus (the Gospel) saying to you?
6. Invite another person to reread the passage.
7. What is Jesus (the Gospel) calling you to do?

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

Luke 4:14-21

¹⁴ Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. ¹⁵ He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

¹⁶ When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

¹⁸ “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

²⁰ And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

Introduce the video:

Video **SESSION 1: BELONGING**
Gospel Reflection:
Archbishop Hosam Naoum (15 minutes)

The Most Reverend Dr. Hosam E. Naoum is the Archbishop for the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem. Feel free to write notes or your observations in your notebook.



1. Play the video.

2. Discussion prompts:

- The archbishop says that belonging is “about caring, being compassionate, pouring out oneself for the sake of others.” What does belonging mean to you?
- As an individual, how are you personally called to ministry as a member of the Body of Christ?
- How would you answer Archbishop Naoum’s question: How do I/we see ourselves and our mission as Christians to share the love of God and love of Jesus Christ to people around us?

REALITIES OF THE HOLY LAND

Introduce the concept of identity and belonging by inviting participants to turn to their Participant Guide: Session 1 to read about the importance of identity and belonging for a person's ability to thrive and live in community.

1. Invite a participant to read aloud the portion about identity.
2. Invite another person to read aloud the portion about belonging.
3. Discuss:
 - If someone were to ask you who you were, what would you say?
 - What is your "identity"?
 - How has your identity been formed?
 - Think about a time when you needed to identify yourself to someone else. What were the circumstances? How did you respond?
 - Tell a time when you have experienced fear because of your identity.
 - What stories are you a part of?

Introduce the next video:

Video **SESSION 1: BELONGING**
Belonging and Identity (30 minutes)

In Israel and Palestine, one's identity and sense of belonging are often in conflict with the region or community in which one lives. Here we will hear from a variety of individuals living in the Holy Land and how they identify themselves. Depending on one's religion, one's ethnicity, and where one lives, a person's identity can be in conflict with their surroundings. In Israel and the Palestinian Occupied Territories, one's identity also determines the access they have to the basic rights and necessities of life.

1. Play the video.

2. Discussion prompts:

- What identities did you hear named in the video? (You may wish to list these on newsprint as the group shares.)
- Why is identity so complex in the Holy Land?
- Why do Palestinians feel like they live "between worlds"?
- How are we formed by narratives and stories? How does this apply to those who live in the Holy Land?
- What surprised you?
- What gives you pause?

Your group may wish to take a stretch break at this point if not done earlier.

OUR INVITATION

Introduce the next video:

Video

SESSION 1: BELONGING

Engaging with the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem: Epiphany, Seattle, WA (4 minutes)

Bearing Witness helps us understand the Diocese of Jerusalem's Christian witness as a response to conflict and human suffering and calls us to discern how we as a church and as individuals can engage with the Diocese of Jerusalem ministries. The program intends to provide us the biblical basis and the inspiration to walk together with our Christian sisters and brothers in the Holy Land. One of the important tools *Bearing Witness* provides are examples of church engagement with the Diocese of Jerusalem that offer possible models for building our own connections to these ministries.

Listen to how Epiphany Parish in Seattle, WA, has responded to the needs of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem by working with AFEDJ.

1. Play the video

2. Conclude the discussion

Over the next four sessions we will see how the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem's own identity seeks to carry out the witness of the love of Christ to the whole region: Arab, Palestinian, Israeli, Jew, Muslim, Christian, young, old, male, female, rich, poor. We will learn about the diocese's institutions of healing, teaching, and breaking barriers that all lead to hope for the people of the region. Archbishop Naoum says that a central aspect of the ministry of the Diocese of Jerusalem is its humanitarian efforts. He shares, "Belonging is also about caring, being compassionate, pouring out oneself for the sake of others whom we serve."

Invite participants to name any personal observation or questions they may have about this session. Record them on newsprint or whiteboard. Note: save all sheets of newsprint (or take a photo of the whiteboard) for use in Session 5.

Review for the next session:

Video

Remember Ahli Arab Hospital and Gaza

<https://youtu.be/wFxK7bdJRl0>

PDF

- GETTING TO KNOW THE HOLY LAND: **Gaza**
- EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF JERUSALEM MINISTRIES: **Hospitals**
- PARTICIPANT SESSION GUIDE: **Session 2: Healing**

CLOSING PRAYER (2 MINUTES)

Lord, give us new strength so that we can build places of belonging: To create a community for all to share their gifts, to know that each of us is loved, to help us to see the light of Christ in all that we serve. Let us remember that each of us is loved, each of us is willed, and each of us is necessary. May we balance mercy and justice so that we can achieve equity and access for all your children. We do this in your name. Amen.

—“Prayer for Inclusion” from Loyola University Chicago

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

These websites and resources will help you learn more about the history of the Holy Land and provide stories from the perspective of more individuals who live in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Each of these will deepen your understanding of why the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem is called to bear witness through their ministries to all people, no matter their identity.

Website and Video Palestine ReMix, Born in '48.

This rich website from the news organization Aljazeera includes a video about five women born in in 1948 (2 Israeli, 3 Palestinian). Each woman tells her story about what it means to live in Israel/Palestine. Each woman's video is less than 2 minutes long.

<https://interactive.aljazeera.com/aje/PalestineRemix/born-in-1948.html#watch>

Website and Video The Balfour Project

The Balfour Project offers numerous articles and videos including the video **Britain in Palestine 1917 – 1948**, an explanation of the historical origins of the Arab-Israeli conflict. However, it does not bring the region's history up to date within the 21st century.

<https://balfourproject.org/film-of-britain-in-palestine-1917-1948/>

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"Respectful Communication Guidelines" and "Mutual Invitation" developed by Eric H. F. Law are used with permission from the Kaleidoscope Institute.

The discernment process used in Session 5 is adapted from The Episcopal Church's Sacred Ground curriculum by the Rev. Canon Stephanie Spellers with Katrina Browne and is used with permission.

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American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem
25 Old King's Highway N. Suite 13
Darien, CT 06820
www.afedj.org

Authors: Sharon Ely Pearson, Heidi Shott, John Lent
Design: Peg Golden Arrington
Video: Five Pebbles Productions
Images: AFEDJ and Shutterstock.