



AFEDJ

American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem

# Bearing Witness

A Journey with Holy Land Christians

SESSION 1:

## Belonging

PARTICIPANT SESSION GUIDE



# Belonging

## Before the Session

### Session 1 Background

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.

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.



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 region or 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.

### Pre-Work

These *Bearing Witness* documents and video will give you background information as you prepare to attend Session 1. We have also included two videos from other sources that we believe will help you understand the history and context of the Holy Land. You should set aside thirty to forty-five minutes prior to the session to review these materials.

#### PDF

- 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.**  
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.  
<https://youtu.be/1wo2TLIMhiw>
- **The Dual Narrative.** A short, animated video, created by an Israeli, that discusses the dual narrative, or how Israelis and Palestinians view their conflict differently.  
<https://youtu.be/1wo2TLIMhiw>

**SESSION OPENING****Opening Prayer**

*O God, who wonderfully created, and yet most 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).

**Jesus' MINISTRY****Scripture Study** Luke 4:14-21

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

<sup>16</sup> 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, <sup>17</sup> and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

<sup>18</sup> “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, <sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

<sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

**Video** **Gospel Reflection:**  
**Archbishop Hosam Naoum**

**Reflect**

- What does belonging mean to me?
- How do I see myself as a Christian with a mission to share the love of God and love of Jesus Christ with people around me?



**REALITIES OF THE HOLY LAND**

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**Identity and Belonging in the Holy Land**

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, (family, friends, partner, teachers, pets), 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.

In Israel and Palestine, one's identity and sense of belonging is often complicated and can be in conflict with the region or community one lives in. Here we will hear from a variety of individuals living in the Holy Land speaking about their identities and their sense of belonging.

**Video** **Belonging and Identity****Reflect**

- What identities did I hear named in the video?
- How am I formed by narratives and stories?
- How are children's and youths' search for their identity complicated by the realities of life in the Holy Land?

**OUR INVITATION**

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**Video** **Engaging with the Diocese of Jerusalem**

Hear how Epiphany Episcopal Church in Seattle, WA has responded to the needs of the overall mission of the Diocese of Jerusalem by working with AFEDJ, with a special focus on Jerusalem Princess Basma Center and Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza.

**Reflect**

- What gives me pause?
- Where is God calling me?
- How has my understanding of life in Israel and Palestine been challenged in this session?

**CLOSING PRAYER**

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*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" Loyola University Chicago)

**WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP**

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**Call to Action** If you feel called to support the ministries of the Diocese of Jerusalem and the crucial work being done in the Holy Land, please subscribe to AFEDJ's mailing list to stay informed, or give a gift that will make an immediate impact.

**Stay informed**

- <https://afedj.org/connect/stay-in-touch-with-the-work-of-american-friends/>

**Make a gift designated "where the need is greatest"**

- <https://afedj.org/give/give-online/>



## 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 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://remix.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/>

## PREPARE FOR SESSION 2 **Healing**

**Review for the next session:**

### Video **Remember Ahli Arab Hospital and Gaza**

<http://youtu.be/wFxK7bdJRl0>

### PDF

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

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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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