



AFEDJ

American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem

Bearing Witness

A Journey with Holy Land Christians

SESSION 5:

Building Hope

FACILITATOR SESSION GUIDE

Preparing For The Session

GOALS:

- Understand the challenges and roadblocks faced by Arab citizens of Israel in employment, education, housing, and economic opportunity
- Learn about programs that help young Arabs in Israel find their voice and gain confidence to be leaders
- Learn more about efforts to work with youth to promote peacemaking and reconciliation among those of different identities in Israel.

Objectives: The ability to....

- Connect the session's Gospel passage to the "greater work" of the ministries of DoJ
- Examine your own call to "greater work" now that you have learned about the witness of Holy Land Christians
- Name several challenges of being a minority Arab citizen of Israel
- Identify where hope is alive amid violence, poverty, and separation in the region
- Name the issues that create conflict and/or detract from a sustainable peace in the region

Content Review

Get ready to lead Session 5: Building Hope

Read and make notes about these documents:

PDF

- GETTING TO KNOW THE HOLY LAND: **Israel and Nazareth**
- PARTICIPANT SESSION GUIDE: **Session 5: Building Hope**

Article **Mapping Hope in the Israel-Palestine Conflict**

by Allen Hester

<https://www.peaceinsight.org/en/articles/mapping-hope-israel-palestine-conflict/?location=israel-palestine&theme=culture-media-advocacy>

Videos Watch and make notes about these videos:

Palestinian students share their dreams for the future

<https://youtu.be/I9JMKsE-bRo>

- SESSION 5: BUILDING HOPE **Gospel Reflection**
- SESSION 5: BUILDING HOPE **Building Hope in the Holy Land**
- SESSION 5: BUILDING HOPE **Engaging with the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem: Grace Presbyterian Church, Springfield, VA**

Several Days before the Session

- Send participants an email reminder for this upcoming session.
- Remind participants of the pre-work for Session 5 to be accomplished before the session. Encourage them to bring a digital or printed copy of their Session Guide.

Video Palestinian Students Share Their Dreams for the Future

<https://youtu.be/W2lBz1tn0zo>

- PARTICIPANT SESSION GUIDE: **Session 5: Building Hope**
- GETTING TO KNOW THE HOLY LAND: **Israel and Nazareth**
- PARTICIPANT SESSION GUIDES: **Sessions 1-4**

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) agreed upon during Session 1 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 5 Background

The goal of *Bearing Witness* is to inform, inspire and empower participants to act. As participants have encountered Christians and others who live in the Holy Land – learning first-hand of their struggles, challenges, and abiding hope in God’s faithfulness – they will find that there is no turning back.

The Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem institutions bring Palestinians hope and help to empower them in all aspects of their lives. This session focuses on Arab citizens of Israel, who face many challenges and roadblocks to employment, education, housing, and economic opportunity. Despite this, there are efforts to promote peacemaking and reconciliation among those of different identities in Israel.

The Apostle Peter advised the earliest Christians to imitate Christ by doing good and remaining faithful to their core Christian convictions, even when that entailed suffering. Like the first Christians, the clergy and lay leaders of the Diocese of Jerusalem have committed themselves to building a new, unified community grounded in God’s redeeming act in Christ. They are ordinary people doing extraordinary things in the land of Jesus. Our response to this sacrifice must be to embrace engagement with our brothers and sisters in the Holy Land as a way to deepen our own Christian journey.

This final session of *Bearing Witness* provides a process for your group to discern what steps they might take, individually, as a group or as a church community, to deepen their engagement with Holy Land Christians through the Diocese of Jerusalem humanitarian ministries.



Session 5: Building Hope

SESSION OPENING

Opening Prayer (2 minutes)

Lord of life, please indwell our common days, that in mind and soul we may be young enough to see brave visions and old enough to dream wise dreams. Move freely, Holy Friend, and enlist us in the service of Christ's brave new world. Amen. (from Brief Prayers, Vol. 3 by B. D. Prewer)

Reminder of Group Norms (2 minutes)

Review the *Respectful Communication Guidelines* that your group constructed during Session 1 by looking at them posted on the newsprint in your gathering space (or reviewing them on screen if meeting online). Ask if there are any questions or changes to be made. Adjust as necessary. Distribute name tags if needed.

Ice-Breaker Activity (5 minutes)

Using *Mutual Invitation* (found in the Facilitator Program Guide) ask the participants:

Share a story or statement that you heard in Bearing Witness that has stayed with you.

or

What is calling to you to act from participating in Bearing Witness?

Introduce the Session (5 minutes)

Begin:

As we begin our last Bearing Witness session, we can revisit the Episcopal Church General Convention resolutions that have been passed over the years, calling us to learn about the Holy Land. We now are able to reflect on how the program has helped us achieve these objectives. During this session we'll give special attention to #6 and work through a brief discernment process.

Episcopal Church General Convention resolutions calling us to learn about and engage with the Christian community in the Holy Land (condensed):

1. Walk where Jesus walked and gain greater biblical insights on Jesus' transformative ministries
2. Deepen our understanding of the significance of the Holy Land to the Abrahamic faiths
3. Raise awareness of the inspiring and powerful Christian witness demonstrated by the community of Palestinian Anglicans in the region
4. 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
5. 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
6. 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

JESUS' MINISTRY

Scripture Study

Facilitator Background Commentary

In this gospel passage (John 14:12-14) Jesus gives three assurances to his disciples on the night of his betrayal and arrest soon after he washes their feet. The first assurance answered their fear that this wasn't the end of their work, it was just beginning. Jesus encouraged the disciples to trust in, rely on, and cling to him in their faith because blessings will come to those who believe. He expected his disciples to carry on his work in even greater magnitude.

Jesus expects all those who believe in him to carry on his work of healing, hope, and reconciliation in the world. Jesus calls and inspires Christians in the Holy Land as well as United States to spread the Good News through bearing witness to acts of hope and empowerment.

One might argue that no one has done greater works than Jesus, but the followers of Jesus, not Jesus himself, took the gospel message to the rest of the world, facing all the ridicule and dangers inherent in such a task. Jesus' disciples were empowered to do the very works that Jesus had done, even after Jesus had ascended to heaven.

This ongoing work of the community is possible because "prayers made in the name of Jesus will be answered." These prayers are not to be asked in self-interest, but in order that God be glorified by the Son. When we pray, we often end our prayer by asking it to be done in Jesus' name. This is more than a simple ask; it implies that our actions will follow what Jesus would do in the same situation.

As Christians our ministry is to represent Christ and his Church; to bear witness to him wherever we may be; and, according to the gifts given us, carry on Christ's work of reconciliation in the world.

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 John 14: 12-14 in their Session 5 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?

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

John 14:12-14

¹² Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

Introduce the video:

Video

SESSION 5: BUILDING HOPE

Gospel Reflection:

The Reverend Nael Abu Rahmoun

(15 minutes)

Fr. Nael Rahmoun, Rector of Christ Church in Nazareth, offers his reflection.



1. Play the video.

2. Discussion prompts:

- How is Jesus working through the Diocese of Jerusalem institutions for peace, justice, and reconciliation?
- How are people, especially women and young people, inspired and empowered by the ministries of the Diocese of Jerusalem?
- Fr. Rahmoun connects this scripture passage with Luke 4:14-21 from Session 1. What connection do you see between the two?
- Why are interfaith relationships important for building hope?
- What would empower you to be an instrument in the hand of Jesus? What resources or training do you need?

THE REALITIES OF LIFE IN THE HOLY LAND

Facilitator Background and Notes:

Note: the time allotted for this part of the session is slightly longer than it has been for previous sessions. This is the last video of Bearing Witness, providing a context for what your group may be called to do as individuals or faith community in the future.

Introduce the next video:

Video

SESSION 5: BUILDING HOPE

Building Hope in the Holy Land

(25 minutes)

1. Play the video.

2. Discussion prompts:

- Fr. Samuel Barhoum, the director of Christ School in Nazareth, states that being a Palestinian living in Israel is to be a “second-class citizen.” What do you think he means by this?
- The Christ School teachers in the video speak about the challenges facing Palestinian children and young people in Israel. How is the school supporting Palestinian students in achieving a productive future?
- In the video, several adults speak about the need to instill confidence in young Arab citizens of Israel. What are the barriers to these young people building self-confidence?
- What gets in the way of reconciliation between all these faiths and ethnicities?
- What efforts are being made toward peacemaking and reconciliation among those with different identities (Muslim, Christian, Jew) in Israel?
- Share something you’ve heard or read that gives you hope for reconciliation and peace in the Holy Land.

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

OUR INVITATION

Introduce the next video:

Video**SESSION 5: BUILDING HOPE**

**Engaging with the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem:
Grace Presbyterian Church, Springfield, VA**

(12 minutes)

This video on engagement with the Diocese of Jerusalem introduces the conclusion of the program and process of discerning next steps.

1. Play the video**2. Discussion prompts:**

Jesus promises to be with us through the power of the Spirit, to work in and through us to accomplish his purposes in the world. This does not necessarily happen in easily visible, spectacular ways. Yet wherever there is healing, reconciling, life-giving work happening, this is the work of God. Wherever there is life in abundance, this is Jesus' presence in our midst. As disciples of Christ, we can help to bring hope and empowerment to all who live in the Holy Land through our support of the work and mission of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem and its institutions.

We are called to heal the brokenhearted with our voices, hands, and hearts. Just as the people we have heard from in *Bearing Witness*, we are called to bear witness to the building of God's kingdom near and far, including the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem.

- What has inspired you about the ministries of the Diocese of Jerusalem that are supported by the American Friends?
- Where do you see hope?
- What transformative ministries is your church engaged with in your community, neighborhood, region, diocese, or the greater world?
- Are there any parallels between what the Diocese of Jerusalem does in schools, hospitals, training centers and your church's ministries of healing, teaching, or breaking barriers?

GROUP DISCERNMENT

This session culminates *Bearing Witness* and begins a process for individual and group discernment and action. The recorded notes from the previous videos in this session may be helpful as well as the responses each participant noted in their Participant Session Guides from the previous four sessions in determining next steps the group or individuals might wish to pursue.

1. Invite participants to review their Participant Session Guides from Sessions 1-4. You can discuss these as a group, organize pairs or triads to share insights, or have participants work on this independently. Discussion prompts:

- What has inspired you about the ministries of the Diocese of Jerusalem that are supported by the American Friends?
- Where do you see hope?
- What transformative ministries is your church engaged with in your community, neighborhood, region, diocese, or the greater world?
- Are there any parallels between what the Diocese of Jerusalem does in schools, hospitals, training centers and your church's ministries of healing, teaching, or breaking barriers?

2. Follow this up with the following questions (also found in the Participant Guide for Session 5.) Choose to do one or more of the discernment options² as you proceed:

Option A. Individual discernment

- What has God continually focused my attention on during *Bearing Witness*?
- What question or concern have I returned to again and again? What might God be calling me to do and to be?
- What do I want to do differently because of what I've learned in *Bearing Witness*?

Option B. Group discernment

- What has God continually focused our group's attention on during the *Bearing Witness* program?
- What question or concern have we returned to again and again?
- Understanding we do not need to come to full consensus in this moment, what might God be calling us as a group to do and to be?
- As a group, what do we want to initiate, do differently, or continue to do?

Option C. Congregational/ministry discernment

- What question or concern for/about our congregation or ministry have we returned to again and again during the *Bearing Witness* program?
- What is God calling us as a congregation to do and to be?
- What do we want to help our congregation to do or see differently because of what we've learned in *Bearing Witness*?

² These are adapted from the concluding discernment section of Session 11 of the Episcopal Church's *Sacred Ground* curriculum. <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/sacred-ground/> (Accessed September 13, 2022 and used with permission).

Whatever possible plans (as a group or as individuals) surface, think about a few of these questions and prepare for next steps.

- What concrete action, choice, and/or commitment do you or your group sense God might be leading you to take up, as a result of the *Bearing Witness* program?
- What resources and gifts might you or your group have for this action, choice, and/or commitment?
- What resources and training might you or your group need?
- How might AFEDJ help?
- What relationships might you or your group need? Who could take a leadership role? Who might you partner with to be in discernment together?

Most importantly:

- Given the concrete action, choice, and/or commitment you described, what might be the next best steps you could take, individually or as a group? Start with reasonable and practical steps. The first step might be, “Ask someone who has done this before to share their wisdom” or “Set a time to reconvene.”
- When could you or your group take these steps? Within a couple of weeks? Over the next month?
- How do we ensure that we maintain momentum in discerning how we engage more deeply with the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem?

CLOSING PRAYER (2 MINUTES)

Merciful and loving God, we give you thanks for the many blessings you have so graciously given us. Thank you for your presence and guidance as we walk the way of peace. Bless the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem and its friends, local and international, including the American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem (AFEDJ). Guide all ecumenical, interfaith, and justice ministries. Grant us all the courage to confront oppression. Strengthen our commitment to the work of justice, peace, and reconciliation among all people, and especially between Palestinians and Israelis. Help us all to see your image in each other. Empower us to stand up for truth and to respect the dignity of every human being. And to you alone be glory and honor, now and forever. Amen.

(adapted from Sabeel’s *Contemporary Way of the Cross*)

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