



AFEDJ

American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem

Bearing Witness

A Journey with Holy Land Christians

SESSION 5:

Building Hope

PARTICIPANT SESSION GUIDE

Building Hope

Before the Session

Session 5 Background

The goal of *Bearing Witness* is to inform, inspire and empower participants to act. As you 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 – we suspect you 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.



Pre-Work

These *Bearing Witness* documents and articles will give you background information as you prepare to attend Session 5. You should set aside thirty minutes to an hour prior to the session to read these materials.

PDF

- GETTING TO KNOW THE HOLY LAND: **Israel and Nazareth**

Review and bring (digitally or a print-out):

- PARTICIPANT SESSION GUIDE – **Session 5: Building Hope**
- PARTICIPANT SESSION GUIDES – **Sessions 1-4**

Video**Palestinian Students Share Their Dreams for the Future**

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

This is the last *Bearing Witness* session. It's a good time to revisit the Episcopal Church General Convention resolutions that have been passed over the years, calling us to learn about the Holy Land. Take a few minutes to reflect on how the program has helped you realize these objectives. This session gives special attention to #6 and includes a brief, related 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

SESSION OPENING

Opening Prayer

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)

Jesus' MINISTRY

Scripture Study 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.

Video Gospel Reflection:**The Reverend Nael Abu Rahmoun**

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

**Reflect**

- How is Jesus working through the Diocese of Jerusalem institutions for peace, justice, and reconciliation?
- Why are interfaith relationships important for building hope?
- What would empower me to be an instrument in the hand of Jesus?

THE REALITIES OF LIFE IN THE HOLY LAND

Video Building Hope in the Holy Land

Those who live in the Holy Land each have their own personal story of struggle and finding hope.

Reflect

- What are the struggles I heard expressed by individuals?
- What story of hope did I hear from a Muslim, Arab Christian, or Israeli?

OUR INVITATION

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.

Video Engaging with the Diocese of Jerusalem

Hear how Grace Presbyterian Church, Springfield, VA has responded to the needs of St. Philip's Church in Nablus in the West Bank by working with AFEDJ.

Reflect

- What has inspired me about the ministries of the Diocese of Jerusalem that are supported by the American Friends?
- Where do I see hope?
- What transformative ministries is my church engaged with in my community, neighborhood, region, diocese, or the greater world?
- What parallels do I see between what the Diocese of Jerusalem does in schools, hospitals, training centers and my 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.

Discerning Next Steps for Me

- 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*?

Discerning Next Steps for Our Group

- 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?

Discerning Next Steps for My Congregation

- 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*?

CLOSING PRAYER

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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