



Issue 31 - Winter 2003

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# ...that they may have life...

*“I came that they may have life and have it abundantly”*

(John10:10)

*by Samia Khoury*

This is the second issue of Cornerstone that is dedicated to raising awareness to the dangers of Christian Zionism. It comes in preparation for Sabeel's Fifth International Conference which will take place in Jerusalem between April 14-18, 2004.

This is also our Christmas issue and it comes out at a time when the Christmas spirit never fails to fill us with a feeling of elation that certainly does not emanate from the gloomy scene of our reality. But after all Jesus came “that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” This is very good news for “they” means the whole world. It is an inclusive message of hope that Sabeel would like to extend to all at this special season of good will.

Jesus started his ministry with an agenda for himself and for everyone of his followers down the ages, an agenda that brings life in its fullness to all humanity.

In the synagogue in Nazareth he opened the book of Isaiah and read:

*“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,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”*

*(Luke 4:18-19). NRSV*

Jesus wanted to make it clear that his message was inclusive so he went on to remind them that Elijah was sent to the gentile woman of Sidon, and that in the prophet Elisha's time only Naaman the Syrian leper was cured (Luke 4: 25-29). Jesus Christ remains at the center of our faith, and it is very clear that he demands of us a commitment to love, justice and peace.

At the same time Jesus was revolutionary in his teachings. While he came “... not to abolish the law, but to fulfill it” (Matthew 5:17-18), he specifically emphasized new concepts. It was the spirit of the Law that he upheld. Jesus said: “You have learnt how it was said: You must love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say this to you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you ...” (Matthew 5:38-39). Here we find that Jesus, by breaking the letter of the law, was fulfilling its spirit.

To be Christian is to adhere to the faith that is based on the teachings of Jesus Christ. Jesus the teacher, the healer, the peacemaker, the giver of life for all, is the focus of the Christian faith. For this reason, we - the indigenous Christians of this Holy Land where Christianity was born, and from where the first message of peace and love was sent to the whole world - are shocked and saddened by this deviation from the spirit of Christianity called Christian Zionism. It is one clear case where theology is being used in the service of politics.

As a lay Christian Palestinian I share with Jesus the same homeland. And I consider it a privilege to belong to a people who were among the first followers of Christ. I can relate to every one of his parables and to every step he took, because it is part of our landscape and of our heritage. I can still sit on the shores of the Sea of Galilee and understand the power of faith that enabled Christ to heal so many. So it is very painful when Christians who received this great legacy from our part of the world are attempting to send it back to us adulterated with hate, violence and the denial of our rights, all in the name of God. This cannot be the God we know in Jesus Christ, God the compassionate and the merciful.

During this Christmas season, we need to reflect on the message of love and peace that Jesus so much emphasized throughout his ministry. Will we as Christians, wherever we are, bear witness to this ministry and work for justice and peace the world over? Will we join forces to challenge what is evil, or will we join hands with those who are out to destroy life for political gains and vested interests all in the name of God?

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*Samia Khoury is a board member of Sabeel.*



## We lay our broken world

*by Anna Briggs*

We lay our broken world  
in sorrow at your feet,  
haunted by hunger, war and fear,  
oppressed by power and hate.

Here human life seems less  
than profit, might and pride,  
though to unite us all in you  
you lived and loved and died.

We bring our broken towns  
our neighbours hurt and bruised;  
you show us how old pain and wounds  
for new life can be used.

We bring our broken loves,  
friends parted, families torn;  
then in your life and death we see  
that love must be reborn.

We bring our broken selves,  
confused and closed and tired;  
then through your gift of healing grace  
new purpose is inspired.

Come fill us, Fire of God  
our life and strength renew;  
find in us trust, and hope, and love,  
and lift us up to you.

*From "This Is the Day: Readings and meditations from the Iona Community"*

# We Wait in Hope for The Prince of Peace

## Dear Friends of Sabeel

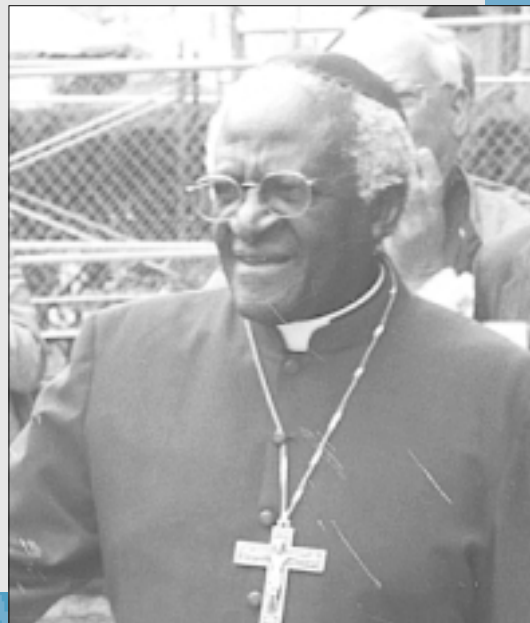
I am honoured to be the Patron of Sabeel International, a title which I share with all of you who work faithfully for the cause of justice in our world. How fitting that I write to you in this blessed season of Advent, a time when we wait in hope for the Prince of Peace.

I ask for your support for Sabeel, a growing worldwide movement committed to justice through non-violence, whose roots are in the community of indigenous Palestinian Christians of the Holy Land.

Sabeel (in Arabic, "The Way") is a voice in the wilderness in these violent times, a voice that strives to guide Palestinian youth through non-violence to liberation and reconciliation, that encourages and strengthens them in their faith and helps them to work for unity and renewal in their communities.

Friends of Sabeel in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Scandinavia, and elsewhere advocate on behalf of Sabeel in the Holy Land. Friends around the world are working to promote more accurate perceptions of the Palestinians by educating Christians in their respective countries about the history and identity of the Palestinian Christians and by forming bonds of friendship between western churches and the ancient Mother of All Churches in the Holy Land. Through national and regional conferences and through holy pilgrimage, Sabeel friends throughout the world are helping to build this grassroots movement for justice.

We remember with gratitude the extraordinary phenomenon of the worldwide movement against Apartheid in South Africa. Now here we are – free! And with a blossoming new democracy. And all because people around the world prayed for us, supported us, were willing



to go to jail for us. Now we see Apartheid in Israel, complete with the separation wall and Bantustans that keep Palestinians rounded up in prisons. History tragically repeats itself. Aptly, there will be a Sabeel conference here in South Africa in 2004 whose theme will be ending Apartheid in the Holy Land.

Please consider a generous contribution to your Friends of Sabeel organization and be a part of the movement to end the oppression and occupation. I urge you to support Sabeel and its educational outreach to Christians and the churches in the west. With the help of people like you who care, even when justice and peace seem to elude us, we will usher in a new age of justice and peace in God's world.

May the Prince of Peace give you his blessing at Christmas.

*Desmond M Tutu Archbishop Emeritus*

# The Origins of Christian Zionism

The Zionist dream, so forcefully articulated by Theodor Herzl in *Der Judenstaat* in 1896 and a year later at the First Zionist Congress, may actually be attributed to the writings and activities of Christians like Edward Irving, Lewis Way, Joseph Wolff and Henry Drummond from as early as the 1820's. The Albury prophetic conferences, named after the village where Drummond lived, gave birth to a proto-Zionist movement committed to the restoration of the Jews to Palestine. Early 19th Century organisations committed to this end included the London Jews Society and Palestine Exploration Fund.

Through the efforts of leaders such as John Nelson Darby, Charles Simeon and Charles Spurgeon, the idea of active British involvement in the restoration of the Jews to Palestine also took shape. Their theological ideas were translated into political reality through the zealous efforts of British politicians such as Lord Shaftesbury, Lord Palmerston, David Lloyd George and Lord Balfour who saw the strategic value of a Jewish State in Palestine. The Jewish Zionist movement itself grew in no small measure due to the involvement of Christian restorationists such as William Hechler. Zionism

*by Stephen Sizer*

eventually gained international recognition through the Balfour Declaration, which in 1917, finally guaranteed a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

## Christian Zionism Defined

At its simplest, Christian Zionism is a political form of philo-Semitism, and can be defined as 'Christian support for Zionism.' Walter Riggans interprets the term in an overtly political sense as, 'any Christian who supports the Zionist aim of the sovereign State of Israel, its army, government, education etc., but it can describe a Christian who claims to support the State of Israel for any reason.' Colin Chapman observes, 'It is hard to think of another situation anywhere in the world where politics have come to be so closely bound up with religion, and where scriptures have such a profound effect on political action.'

Christian Zionists are essentially apologists for the State of Israel. This support usually involves accusing those critical of Israel of anti-Semitism, and invariably leads to the justification of Israel's illegal occupation and settlement of

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the West Bank, Golan and Gaza on biblical grounds.

Grace Halsell, for example, asks: ‘What is the message of the Christian Zionist? Simply stated it is this: every act taken by Israel is orchestrated by God, and should be condoned, supported, and even praised by the rest of us.’ This leads Dale Crowley, a Washington based religious broadcaster, to describe dispensational Christian Zionism as a cult, indeed, the ‘fastest growing cult in America’:

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The Middle East Council of Churches similarly reject Christian Zionism, ‘as representing a heretical interpretation of Holy Scripture’, while John Stott describes it as ‘biblical anathema.’

Whether consciously or otherwise, Christian Zionists subscribe to a religious Jewish agenda best expressed by Rabbi Shlomo Aviner, who claims: ‘We should not forget ... that the supreme purpose of the ingathering of exiles and the establishment of our State is the building of the Temple.

The Temple is at the very top of the pyramid.’ Another rabbi, Yisrael Meida, explains the link between politics and theology within Jewish Zionism: ‘It is all a matter of sovereignty. He who controls the Temple Mount, controls Jerusalem. And he who controls Jerusalem, controls the land of Israel.’ This paradigm may be illustrated by way of three concentric rings. The land represents the outer ring, Jerusalem the middle ring and the Temple is the centre ring. The three rings comprise the Zionist agenda by which the Land was claimed in 1948, the Old City of Jerusalem was occupied in 1967 and the Temple site is being contested. For the religious Zionist, Jewish or Christian, the three are inextricably linked.

### The Distinctive Theology of Christian Zionism

Seven basic theological tenets are accepted, in varying degrees, by Christian Zionists.

1. Christian Zionism is founded first of all upon a literal and futurist interpretation of the Bible which leads proponents to distinguish between references to Israel and the Church. Injunctions and promises concerning the ancient Jews are applied to the contemporary State of Israel rather than to the Church.
2. From this hermeneutic flows the conviction that the Jews remain God’s ‘chosen people’, distinct from the Church.
3. God’s end-time purpose for the Jews is expressed in Restorationism.

4. The destiny of the Jewish people is to return to the land of Israel and reclaim their inheritance promised to Abraham and his descendants for ever. This inheritance extends from the River of Egypt to the Euphrates.
5. Within their land, Jerusalem is recognised to be their exclusive, undivided and eternal capital, and therefore it cannot be shared or divided.
6. At the heart of Jerusalem will be the rebuilt Jewish Temple to which all the nations will come to worship God.
7. Just prior to the return of Jesus, there will be seven years of calamities and war known as the Tribulation which will culminate in a great battle called Armageddon during which the godless forces opposed to both God and Israel will be defeated. Jesus will then return as the Jewish Messiah and king to reign in Jerusalem for a thousand years and the Jewish people will enjoy a privileged status and role in the world.

A refutation of this theological position will be presented by a variety of speakers at the International Sabeel Conference in Jerusalem next April.

### The Political Implications of Christian Zionism

Christian Zionists have shown varying degrees of enthusiasm for implementing six basic convictions that arise from their literal reading of the Bible:

The belief that the Jews remain God's chosen people leads Christian Zionists to seek to bless Israel in material ways. However, this also invariably results in the uncritical endorsement of and justification for Israel's racist and apartheid policies, in the media, among politicians and through solidarity tours to Israel.

As God's chosen people, the final restoration of the Jews to Israel is therefore actively encouraged and facilitated through partnerships between Christian organisations and the Jewish Agency.

Eretz Israel, as delineated in scripture, belongs exclusively to the Jewish people, therefore the land must be annexed and the settlements adopted and strengthened.

Jerusalem is regarded as the eternal and exclusive capital of the Jews, and cannot be shared with the Palestinians.

Therefore, strategically, Western governments are placed under pressure by Christian Zionists to relocate their embassies to Jerusalem and thereby recognise the fact.

The Third Temple has yet to be built, the priesthood consecrated and sacrifices reinstated. Christian Zionists offer varying degrees of support to Jewish Temple Mount organisations committed to achieving it.

Since Christian Zionists are convinced there will be an apocalyptic war between good and evil in the near future, there is no prospect for lasting peace between Jews and Arabs. Indeed, to advocate Israel compromise with Islam or coexist with Palestinians in a 'land for peace' deal is to compromise the promises of God and identify with those destined to oppose God and Israel in the imminent battle of Armageddon.

### The Significance of the Christian Zionist Movement

Christian Zionism as a movement is very diverse, ranging from individual Christian leaders whose denominations have no stated position on Zionism, to major international evangelical organizations which are unapologetically Zionist. Some have an explicit political agenda, such as Bridges for Peace and the International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem, which also enjoys diplomatic status in several Central American countries. Both have disavowed or redefined the Christian gospel and identify with right-wing Israeli opinion, lobbying the US government to continue to finance Israel's expansionist agenda. Other organisations such as Jews for Jesus and the Church's Ministry among Jewish People (CMJ) are primarily evangelistic or messianic but also espouse Zionism on biblical grounds. Exobus and the Ebenezer Trust are representative of organisations specializing in facilitating the transportation of Jews to Israel from Russia and Eastern Europe, while Christian Friends of Israel Communities encourage churches to adopt Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories.

Contemporary Christian Zionist leaders include Derek Prince, Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, Hal Lindsey, Mike Evans, Charles Dyer, John Walvoord and Dave Hunt, These individuals have achieved considerable influence in

popularising an apocalyptic view of the future legitimising Zionism among Western Christians. That their teaching also warrants the description 'Armageddon Theology' is evident from the provocative titles of many of their recent books.

Christian Zionism is pervasive within mainline evangelical, charismatic and independent denominations including the Assemblies of God, Pentecostal and Southern Baptists as well as many of the independent mega-churches. Crowley claims they are led by 80,000 fundamentalist pastors, their views disseminated by 1,000 Christian radio stations as well as 100 Christian TV stations. Doug Kreiger lists over 250 pro-Israeli organisations founded in the 1980s alone.

Estimates as to the size of the movement as a whole vary considerably. While critics like Crowley claim, 'At least one out of every 10 Americans is a devotee', advocates such as Robertson and Falwell claim the support of 100 million Americans with whom they communicate weekly. Dale Crowley's own estimate is that there are between '25 to 30 million' pro-Israeli Christians in America, a number that is growing. Robert Boston, for example, in his biography of Pat Robertson, argues that his Christian Coalition, with an annual budget of \$25 million and over 1.7 million members, is 'arguably ... the single most influential political organisation in the U.S.' At the other end of the scale, the National Unity Coalition for Israel brings together 200 different Jewish and Christian Zionist organisations including the International Christian Embassy, Christian Friends of Israel and Bridges for Peace and claims a support base of 40 million active members. These organisations, in varying degrees, and for a variety of reasons, some contradictory, make up a broad coalition which is shaping the Christian Zionist agenda today.

Without the sustained political support of Christian Zionists in America, and significant government funding, it is doubtful whether the State of Israel would have remained in existence since 1948, let alone continued to occupy and settle the West Bank since 1967.

At the same time it demonstrates an inexcusable lack of compassion for the Palestinian tragedy and the plight of the indigenous Christian community. In doing so, whether intentionally or otherwise, it has legitimised their oppression in the name of God while committing the Jewish people themselves to an apocalyptic future far more horrifying than even the Shoah.

### A Critical Assessment of Christian Zionism

The fundamental question Christian Zionists must answer is this: what difference did the coming of the kingdom of God in the person of Jesus Christ make to the traditional Jewish hopes and expectations concerning the land and people? Clarence Bass crystallises the issue with a series of more specific rhetorical questions:

'It is legitimate to ask whether Dispensationalism is not orientated more from the Abrahamic Covenant than from the Cross. Is not its focus centred more on the Jewish kingdom than on the Body of Christ? Does it not interpret the New Testament in the light of Old Testament prophecies, instead of interpreting those prophecies in the light of the more complete revelation of the New Testament?'

Christian Zionists appear to believe that the coming of Jesus Christ made little or no difference to the nationalistic and territorial aspirations of 1st Century Judaism. As a result, the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC), representing

the indigenous and ancient Oriental and Eastern Churches, regard Christian Zionism as a deviant heresy. They assert, for instance, that Christian Zionists have aggressively imposed an aberrant expression of the Christian faith and an erroneous interpretation of the Bible which is subservient to the political agenda of the modern State of Israel. They claim the movement represents a tendency to: ‘... force the Zionist model of theocratic and ethnocentric nationalism on the Middle East ... (rejecting) ... the movement of Christian unity and inter-religious understanding which is promoted by the (indigenous) churches in the region. The Christian Zionist programme, with its elevation of modern political Zionism, provides the Christian with a world view where the gospel is identified with the ideology of success and militarism. It places its emphasis on events leading up to the end of history rather than living Christ’s love and justice today.’

In its apocalyptic and political forms especially, Christian Zionism distorts the Bible and marginalises the universal

“ ‘It is so; God chose the Jews; the land is theirs by divine gift. These dicta cannot be questioned or resisted. They are final. Such verdicts come infallibly from Christian biblicists for whom Israel can do no wrong - thus fortified. But can such positivism, this unquestioning finality, be compatible with the integrity of the Prophets themselves? It certainly cannot square with the open peoplehood under God which is the crux of New Testament faith. Nor can it well be reconciled with the ethical demands central to law and election alike.’ ”

imperative of the Christian message of equal grace and common justice. Bishop Kenneth Cragg summarises the implications of its intrinsic ethnic exclusivity:

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Such literalist assumptions preclude any possibility of an alternative reading of the Bible, history or a just and lasting outcome to the Middle East peace negotiations. Instead, Christian Zionism shows an uncritical tolerance of Rabbinic Judaism and an endorsement of the Israeli political Right. At the same time it demonstrates an inexcusable lack of compassion for the Palestinian tragedy and the plight of the indigenous Christian community. In doing so, whether intentionally or otherwise, it has legitimised their oppression in the name of God while committing the Jewish people themselves to an apocalyptic future far more horrifying than even the Shoah.

### **Christian Zionism: An Alternative?**

Colin Chapman suggests that a form of Biblical Zionism which accepts the existence of the State of Israel, can work and pray for the peace and security of the Jewish people alongside a Palestinian state on political and humanitarian grounds without needing to justify or sacralise Israel through biblical or theological arguments.

*Dr. Stephen Sizer is vicar of Christ Church, Virginia Water. He is also chairman of the interaund at [www.virginiawater.co.uk/christchurch/](http://www.virginiawater.co.uk/christchurch/)*

Join Us For

# 5<sup>th</sup> International Sabeel Conference

April 14-18, 2004

## Challenging Christian Zionism: Theology, Politics, and the Israel-Palestine Conflict

Keynote Speaker

*The Most Revd Dr Rowan Williams  
Archbishop of Canterbury*

For more information regarding program and speakers, pre- and post-conference programs, registration form, and fees, visit our website at [www.sabeel.org](http://www.sabeel.org).

Notre Dame Conference Center, Jerusalem.

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Topics will include areas such as:

- History and Theology of Christian Zionism
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- Christian Zionism and International Politics
- Key Responses to Christian Zionism
- Advocacy and Strategic Planning

\*Pre-conference Program during Holy Week blends the traditions of both Eastern and Western churches and a contemporary Way of the Cross. April 3-11, 2004.

\*Post-Conference Program "Witness for Justice and Peace". Includes day trip in and around the West Bank and the Galilee (situation allowing). April 19- 23, 2004

Registration Ends March 31, 2004

Space is limited so register early!

# A BIBLICAL REFLECTION ON GENESIS 12:3

*by Naim Ateek*

One of the biblical texts that is often used by Christian Zionists is Genesis 12:3. I still recall the first time I heard it mentioned. It was Christmas 1989 when Archbishop Desmond Tutu came to visit us in Jerusalem. The first intifada was at its peak. Yet in spite of the worsening political situation, the restrictions on movement, and the oppressive Israeli army measures, we managed to have the festive Christmas services with overflow crowds at every event.

On the day after Christmas, we went on a courtesy visit to the Israeli minister of religious affairs. Archbishop Tutu spoke "truth to power" and combined courage with candor. He told the minister about the importance of giving the Palestinians justice and freedom. As we were leaving the government building, we were followed by a man who kept repeatedly shouting the words at us, "Genesis twelve three; Genesis 12:3." I could hardly wait to get home in order to look up the text in the Bible. It read, "I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." The message that the man wanted to communicate to us was simple and clear. For him the text meant that God blesses all those who stand with and support Israel and curses those who stand

against it. Furthermore, he presumed that if we were critical of Israel's policies we were incurring God's curse and he wanted to invoke that curse on us.

For those who accept the literal historicity of this text, the words reflected the belief that some ancient Israelites held that God would bless their friends and curse their enemies. It was a primitive form of nationalism that looked at one's own tribal interest and brought down a curse on the enemies. Such pronouncements attributed to tribal gods were not uncommon in the ancient world.

In its context, Genesis 12:3 was addressed by God to Abraham before he had any children and long before he came to Canaan. There is no mention of "Israel" or "Jews" by name but the words have been understood as a blessing to Abraham's lineage. Since Ishmael and Isaac were both Abraham's children, the blessing presumably must have included both and their descendents, i.e. the Arabs and Jews. Christian and Jewish Zionists, however, have interpreted the text as an exclusive blessing given to Jews while the curse they allot to the Arabs, thus butchering the text and using it to fit their modern political agenda.

In biblical times, many Jews who believed that they were the “chosen” nation expected God to be partial to them. Understood narrowly, such a theology was not only critiqued by later prophets, but also had dire consequences. Instead of entailing the responsibility of being a blessing to others, it carried within it the possibility of extreme violent actions. Genesis 12:3 could directly lead to passages such as Deuteronomy 7:2 where the Israelites were summoned by God to ethnically cleanse and utterly destroy their enemies, i.e. those who have been cursed, namely, the indigenous people of the land, the Canaanites. Such self-righteousness and arrogance was deeply embedded in the psyche and beliefs of some people and seemed to have surfaced frequently.

As an example, the prophet Amos observed how such arrogance was playing itself out in the way people of power were oppressing the poor of his day. He addressed them with God’s word in a sharp and abrasive way. “O children of Israel, are you not the same to me as the Ethiopians?” says the Lord. “Did I not bring Israel out from Egypt, the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir? Surely the eyes of the Lord God are on the sinful kingdom. I will destroy it from the face of the earth...”(Amos 9:7-8). For Amos, God’s liberating activity and blessing were not restricted to Israel. It was going on all the time to others. In fact, God was carrying out various exoduses all along for other nations. As the Israelites had their exodus so did the Philistines and the Syrians. God’s liberating power for the oppressed was not limited to one nation. Moreover, God’s eye is always on justice. God will judge even “the chosen” when they commit evil and injustice, those who believe that they are so special that “no disaster will overtake them” (vs.10).

Similarly, the book of Jonah critiques the same narrow theology of the Genesis text. The story of Jonah begins with a prophet who refused to accept God’s care and concern for the Assyrians (today’s Iraq), ancient Israel’s bitterest enemy. For him, they should be cursed and destroyed. The great lesson in the story of Jonah is that instead of a curse and annihilation, God was embracing the people of Nineveh, the Assyrian capital, with mercy and compassion.

“ For those who accept the literal historicity of this text, the words reflected the belief that some ancient Israelites held that God would bless their friends and curse their enemies. It was a primitive form of nationalism that looked at one’s own tribal interest and brought down a curse on the enemies. Such pronouncements attributed to tribal gods were not uncommon in the ancient world. ”

It is shocking to see Christian Zionists quoting Genesis 12:3 as a foundational text in support of the state of Israel and for condemnation of the Palestinians and the Arabs. Although many of these Christians know the text of the Bible almost verbatim, they fail to comprehend its deeper message and meaning. Christian and Jewish Zionists that quote Genesis 12:3 are not being faithful to their own faith traditions. For Jews, it is not in line with the deeper teaching of Judaism. As for Christians, it certainly contradicts the teaching and spirit of Jesus Christ and the New Testament. Both groups are betraying the more noble and profound teaching of the Bible. They are not working for peace or reconciliation. They are taking verses out of context, misinterpreting them to suit their narrow political agenda and by doing so, stain and blemish the heart of their religious faith and contribute to the perpetuation of an oppressive occupation and the furtherance of injustice.

I simply wonder, how Christian Zionists can reconcile the invocation of a curse on the Palestinians with the words of Jesus Christ, “...love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you that you may be children of your Father who is in heaven...”(Matthew 5:43-45). Jesus’ words are not only a critique of Genesis 12:3 they are, indeed, a revamping of it.

*The Rev. Dr. Naim Ateek is the director of Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center*

# A Christian Zionist Primer

by Donald Wagner

## (Part II) Defining Christian Zionism

The term Christian Zionism is a relatively recent category, rarely utilized prior to the early 1990s. Self-proclaimed Christian Zionist organizations such as the International Christian Embassy-Jerusalem and the U.S. based Bridges for Peace, both with offices in Jerusalem, have been operating for twenty years but have been under the radar of most Middle East experts and the mainstream media until the post-September 11, 2001 era.

Briefly stated, Christian Zionism is a movement within Protestant fundamentalism that understands the modern state of Israel as the fulfillment of Biblical prophecy and thus deserving of political, financial, and religious support. Christian Zionists work closely with the Israeli government, religious and secular Jewish Zionist organizations, and are particularly empowered during periods when the more conservative Likud Party is in control of the Knesset. Both the secular and religious media place Christian Zionists within the larger Protestant evangelical movement, which claims upwards of 100-125 million supporters in the United States. To be more precise, Christian Zionism should be placed within the fundamentalist wing of Protestant Christianity, as the evangelical movement is far larger and more diverse in its theology and historical development.

Christian Zionism grows out of a particular theological system called premillennial dispensationalism. Its doctrines became clear during the early nineteenth century in England when there was an outpouring of millennial doctrines following the year 1800. The preaching and writings of the renegade Irish clergy, John Nelson Darby and Scotsman, Edward Irving, emphasized the literal and future fulfillment of such teachings as the rapture,

the rise of the Antichrist, the Battle of Armageddon, and the central role of a revived nation-state, Israel, during the latter days. Darby's teachings became a central feature for many of the great preachers of the 1880s-1900 period, including the evangelists Dwight L. Moody and Billy Sunday; major Presbyterian preachers such as Rev. James Brooks, Philadelphia radio preacher Harry B. Ironsides, and Cyrus I. Scofield. When Scofield applied Darby's eschatology to the Bible, the result was a superimposed outline of premillennial dispensationalist notations on the Biblical text, known as the Scofield Bible. Gradually the Scofield Bible became the only version used by most Evangelical and fundamentalist Christians for the next ninety-five years.

Premillennialism is a type of Christian theology that is as old as Christianity itself. It has its roots in Jewish apocalyptic thought and generally believes that Jesus will return to earth before he establishes a literal millennial kingdom under his sovereignty. Darby added the distinctive elements of the "rapture" of true, born-again Christians prior to the return of Jesus, and he interpreted all major prophetic texts with a future predictive understanding. Darby also marked world history according to certain periods called "Dispensations," that served to guide believers as to how they should conduct themselves. In this regard, the fulfillment of prophetic signs became the central tasks of Christian interpretation.

As for a working definition, Christian Zionism is a nineteenth and twentieth century movement within Protestant fundamentalism that supports the maximalist claims of Jewish political Zionism, including Israel's sovereignty over the entirety of historic Palestine including Jerusalem. The modern state of Israel is viewed as a fulfillment of the prophetic scriptures and is one of the necessary stages prior to the second coming of Jesus. Christian Zionism is marked by the following theological convictions:

\* God's covenant with Israel is eternal, exclusive, and will not be abrogated, according to Genesis 12:1-7; 15:4-7; 17:1-8; Leviticus 26:44-45; Deuteronomy 7:7-8.

\* There are two distinct and parallel covenants in the Bible, one with Israel that is never revoked and the other with the Church, that is superceded by the covenant with Israel. The Church is a "mere parenthesis" in God's plan and as such it will be removed from history during an event called the Rapture (I Thess. 4: 13-17; 5: 1-11). At that point Israel the nation will be restored as the primary instrument of God on earth.

\* Christian Zionists claim that Genesis 12:3 ("I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you") should be interpreted literally with the necessary political, economic, moral, and spiritual support for Israel the nation and for the Jewish people in general.

\* Christian Zionists interpret the Bible literally and utilize a predictive and futurist hermeneutic, understanding Apocalyptic texts from the book of Daniel, Zechariah 9-12, Ezekiel 37-8, I Thessalonians 4-5, and the Book of Revelation as having a literal and future fulfillment. To be more precise, the version of premillennialism popularized by Darby, Irving, and Scofield should carry the adjectives "futurist premillennial dispensationalism" so as to set it aside from the historic premillennialism which was the view of eschatology held by many Church Fathers (Tertullian, Cyril of Jerusalem, Justin Martyr, et al.)

\* Christian Zionists adopt a dispensationalist approach to history as advanced by John Nelson Darby and popularized by C. I Scofield's version of the Bible, published by Oxford University Press in 1909. As the "Scofield Bible" was utilized by fundamentalist leaders, clergy, Bible colleges, institutes, and seminaries, it became the most significant transmitter of premillennial dispensationalism and as such prepared the way for Christian Zionism.

\* Christian Zionists and premillennial dispensationalists have a pessimistic view of history as they await in eager anticipation the unfolding of a series of wars and tragedies pointing to the return of Jesus. The establishment of the state of Israel, the rebuilding of the Third Temple, the rise of the Antichrist, and the buildup of armies poised to attack Israel are among the signs leading to the final battle and Jesus' return. Considerable speculation by leading authorities in Bible prophecy seeks to interpret political developments according to the prophetic schedule of events that should unfold according to their view of scripture. As an apocalyptic and dualistic type of theology, the movement views history with a sense of pessimism, looking for the escalating power and influence of satanic forces aligned to the Antichrist who will do battle with Israel and those aligned with her as the end draws near. Judgment will befall nations and individuals according to how they "bless Israel" (Genesis

12:3).

\* Christian Zionism has a low ecclesiology (doctrine of the church) due in part to its emergence from anti-state church clergy and theologians in England. Today these views find significant support among the charismatic, Pentecostal, and independent Bible churches in Protestant fundamentalism. They often view mainline Protestant, Orthodox, and Catholic denominations with hostility and have at times understood the World Council of Churches and related bodies to be tools of the Antichrist. In the Holy Land, Christian Zionists have been hostile toward Palestinian Christians and generally detest Muslims as evil forces worshipping another God. Recent comments by Christian Zionists such as Rev. Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, and Franklin Graham (son of evangelist Billy Graham) have added to the suspicion with which many Muslims view the Christian West.

Christian Zionism is a growing political and religious movement within the most conservative branches of Protestant fundamentalism, but it can also be found in the broader Evangelical branches of Christianity including the evangelical wings of the mainline Protestant churches (Presbyterian, United Methodist, Lutheran, etc.). It thrives during periods of political and economic unrest, such as the present time, with the rise of international terrorism, global recession, and fear of a series of wars in the Middle East. With its pessimistic view of history, Christian Zionism seeks to provide simple and clear answers from its literal and predictive approach to the Bible. Some estimate that these views are held by 20-25 million U.S. fundamentalist Christians, however, due to its increased interest and the uncertainty of the times, it is a growing phenomenon.

*The Rev. Dr. Donald E Wagner is ordained Presbyterian clergy who presently serves as Associate Professor of Religion at North Park University in Chicago where he is also the Executive Director of the Center for Middle East Studies.*

We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people but for the appalling silence of the good people.  
*Martin Luther King, Jr.*

# Snapshots of our Activities

Another year is coming to an end ...but not the Israeli occupation YET! Despite new peace initiatives and accords, the apartheid wall arrogantly imposes separation and discrimination, even in the heart of Jerusalem. Thousands of worshippers were harassed and prevented from reaching al-Haram al Sharif for prayers at Eid al-Fitr. How many Christians will be able to celebrate Christmas in Bethlehem this year?

As Christians enter the Advent season, all peoples await "peace on earth" but how can peace prevail without good will among human beings? Will the Christmas star ever shine again? At Sabeel, we believe that "The true light, which enlightens everyone, was (and is) coming into the world" (John 1:9).

It is that certainty that drives Sabeel's ministry forward...

## Programs

### Clergy Programs

In preparation for Sabeel's 5th International Conference that will take place in April 2004 (Read announcement on page 9), the focus of the fall and winter clergy meetings has been "Christian Zionism".

On November 2, the meeting was held at the Episcopal Church in Ramallah, and was attended by representatives of the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran and Episcopal Churches there. Clergymen from Jerusalem, Jifna, Taybeh, Abboud and Jericho were also present. The Rev. Fadi Diab,

the Episcopal hosting parish priest, led the Bible Study; and Father Rick Van De Water, the Roman Catholic parish priest of Jifna, presented a paper on Christian Zionists and the Land in the Bible. (Father Rick's bible study "Who is Israel" can be read in Cornerstone issue 30).

On November 24, the Franciscan Brotherhood hosted the meeting at St. Savior's convent in Jerusalem. Father Artenio Vitoros, the General Curator welcomed the eight priests from Jerusalem and Jericho. Father George Abu Khazen, the parish priest led the Bible Study, and the Rev. Yazid Said presented "A Christian Critique of the Ideology of Christian Zionism." Lunch was a sumptuous feast shared with the friars. This was a special meeting for both hosts and invitees: for the hosts, it was an introduction to Sabeel and its ecumenical spirit, evident in the love that bonds the priests; and for the clergy, it gave a deeper understanding of the binding community life of the Franciscans.



## Women

Laughter and singing rang out in the Pilgerhaus in Tabgha / Tiberias when over 105 women from Jerusalem and Nazareth filled the premises on October 24 for another of the empowering experiences that combine leisure, spirituality, education and social sharing. The trip from Jerusalem to Tabgha passed quickly as the Jerusalem group shared prayers, scripture reading, hymns, a fifteen-minute breakfast stop, the viewing of the video "Mary of Nazareth: from Icon to Woman" and jokes- appetizers for the encounter with their sisters from Nazareth. The meeting started with a game of pairing up with a partner for the day. After all, games are fun for all ages, and what better way to respond to discipleship than in pairs on the shore of the Sea of Galilee? Father Jack Karam, the Franciscan priest from Mjeidal, quickly captured the full attention of the group with his guitar, mingling modern hymns and spiritual reflection on the different ways of responding to the call to serve. Starting with Mary's important role and ending with Sister Theresa's dedication to the poor, Father Karam encouraged the women to choose their own path for service. Specific examples of local individual efforts to bring joy in their own community circles inspired the group to find new initiatives.



In the second part of the program, Cedar Duaybis introduced Sabeel to the many newcomers among the participants. She gave a brief but comprehensive summary of Sabeel's roots, birth, budding and blooming. The buffet lunch that followed offered an opportunity for interaction and socializing.

In the afternoon, the pilgrims visited two of the religious sites on the shore: the Heptagenon Church, locally known as the church of the multiplication of fishes and loaves, and the church of St. Peter's primacy. Though some women took

the buses, many decided to walk down the trail through avocado orchards, reliving the scriptures, and enjoying the view of the Sea of Galilee. Father Elie Kurzum, one of the spiritual guides and faithful friends of Sabeel reflected on the gospel events, encouraging the women to practice the lessons learnt.



The day would have been incomplete without spending some moments at the edge of the water. It was with great reluctance that the group finally parted because the premises closed at five. The last minutes were precious, as some of the women wading in the lake rushed out of the water and cameras clicked for one more shot. Everybody then gathered in a circle for a final prayer, thankful for the encounter with their new friends and sisters, and through them with God.

## Youth

Teen-agers! Responding to a request by teen-agers for a workshop in which they could air their feelings, Haya Di'des invited Jeanette Saleh and Dr. Charlie Abu Sa'ada on November 28 to Ein Karem to help the youth who attended the workshop speak honestly about their fears, wishes and aspirations. The location itself was inspiring and relaxing and Jeanette, the social worker, managed to create a friendly and trusting atmosphere. She gradually moved from physiological to intellectual and emotional changes that teen-agers undergo, inviting the boys and girls to relax and share their worries, concerns, and frustrations in an interactive manner. Individual and group exercises reflected the teen-agers' need for privacy, independence from all kinds of authority and power, anger at social norms and increasing religious intolerance. Unlike other teen-agers in the rest of the world, Palestinian youth have also to bear the tension of



the ongoing political situation that cripples activity, creates lack of security and adds to the inner conflict.

Dr. Charlie Abu Sa'ada, who teaches theology at Bethlehem University, touched the surface of the essence of relationships among Christian youth as based on Jesus Christ's relation with humanity. He planted the seeds for thought about love, equity, dialogue and other issues that need to be explored in further meetings. It is clear that Sabeel now has an added responsibility towards this new nucleus of teen-agers, who come from the same residential area and attend the same schools.



\*Two of the participants had already attended the leadership training course for summer camps last June and three of them, Nevine Nasrallah, Amira Abdallah and Abeer Atallah, along with Iba' Fatho and Hani Kretim who could not attend the workshop on Friday, spent their three-day Eid-il Fitr holidays at Sabeel assisting in sending out hundreds of flyers for the local activities as well as preparing the mailing of 7000 envelopes for the International Conference in April. (Proof in pictures below)

## Community-Building

Sabeel arduously continues in civil society building initiatives:

- The campaign in front of the Ministry of Interior is still on and if the decision to move the whole ministry to better premises stands true then the Jerusalemites have achieved a small victory!
- Sabeelers participated in a workshop organized by PANORAMA on better coordination and division of labor in civil society; an encounter led by PENGON and PARC on the calamity that is "the apartheid wall"; a roundtable discussion at PASSIA with Meron Benvenisti, former deputy mayor of Jerusalem, about his view of a bi-national state; and a two- day seminar on "Peace Journalism", led by Jake Lynch from the BBC at Dar an-Nadwa in Bethlehem.

## Visitors

The visits of delegations, fact- finding groups and concerned individuals are a source of encouragement and hope. Despite the "walls of separation", we are not totally isolated. There are people who care and are willing to risk their lives to show solidarity and stand for the truth. A special thank you for the CPT delegations, the Tantur Course students, the EAPPIs, DIAKONIA and SM Swedish delegations and youth leaders, German visitors and representatives of the Church of Scotland for your time, concern and support.

## Other

Sabeel is deeply touched by the willingness of the clergymen and women who spared time, knowledge and faith to keep the Sabeel tradition of celebrating the Eucharist Service on Thursdays, during the four months' absence of the Rev. Naim Ateek in USA. The variety of liturgies was so enriching. The word of God can be expressed in different ways; you fed our spiritual hunger, assuring us that we are all one as we partake of communion together. May God bless you:

- The Rev. Clarence Musgrave, St, Andrew's Scottish Church
- The Rev. Anders Blomqvist, Chaplain of Swedish Theological Institute,
- The Rev. Bill Broughton, Episcopal Church
- Father Peter Madros, Latin Patriarchate
- Dan Simmons, Evangelical Covenant Church
- The Rev. Susan Burns (visiting Episcopal Pastor, Bethesda, Maryland).
- The Rev. Peter Friis-Nielsen, FOSS Denmark

\* The Sabeel family wishes Samia Khoury, Treasurer and Board Member of Sabeel, a Happy 70th Birthday. Though

Rawdat al- Zuhoor accepted Samia's graceful retirement, Sabeel is in need of Samia's sound advice and writing skills that are improving with age!

\* At the recent General Assembly of Middle East Association for Retreat and Training Centers MEATRC held in Cairo, November 3, Sabeel, represented by Nora Carmi, was unanimously accepted and welcomed as a member, the third from Palestine, after Dar an-Nadwa and Al-Liqa'. The association, a result of a joint WCC/MECC vision and initiative, is a living example of Christian service in the Middle East, with members in Egypt, Syria and Lebanon too. It is also closely connected with OIKOSNET, the umbrella that covers similar training centers in all continents. All participants of the MEATRC meeting later attended a three-day workshop on "Conflict Resolution" in Alexandria.

## Volunteers

Sabeel bids farewell to its two Swedish volunteers Hanna Lagerlof and Josef Sahlberg. For one year, Hanna was the Swedish connection, translating articles and helping with the Palestinian/Swedish Children's book "Ahlan wa Sahlan". With photographic skill, Hanna captured memorable scenes of the solidarity visit, in March 2003. Hopefully, Hanna will remain in touch as she will be working at DIAKONIA, up the hill from Sabeel.

In the three months that Josef volunteered at Sabeel, as webmaster, he gave Sabeel's web a facelift. We wish him well as he continues his studies back home.

Rob Thorburn, a software and computer expert, from the UK, has joined Sabeel this month. We are confident that he will solve all our computer problems!

Sabeel is pleased that Cathy Nichols is back, especially that we have a new volunteer in El'ad, her son.

## News from Nazareth

On October 22, over eighty people celebrated the expansion of Sabeel Nazareth-a humble improvement from one rented room to two rented rooms in the YMCA building. The original small room will still serve as office and operations headquarters, and the larger one, furnished with bookshelves, a meeting table and a small kitchen area, can be used for courses and encounters, as the dedicated members and volunteers expand their quality service to all. After Father Elie Kurzum and the Rev. Ibrahim Sam'an lifted up prayers and offered their blessings, the guests enjoyed the delicacies offered by the volunteers before moving up to a larger hall for the official celebration. Violet Khoury, the Coordinator,

welcomed the audience and the Jerusalem Sabeel family, Board members and staff who had come up for this joyous occasion.

Unable to attend, the Rev. Naim Ateek had sent a special message from the USA that was read by George Dibbini. Father Elias Chacour, the Vice-President who, ten years ago, had been part of the dream that became a reality - Sabeel-was the main speaker. He challenged the audience to keep up their Christian witness by living their faith, especially at times of conflict. Cedar Duaybis recounted Sabeel's vision and fulfillment, and Samia Khoury presented Sabeel Nazareth with a token gift of Palestinian embroidery. The program included scripture readings and exquisite spiritual singing by Abeer Nusayr accompanied by Tony Yamini on the guitar.

On November 21 and 28, Sabeel Nazareth held two classical, spiritual concerts at the Cultural Center in Nazareth and St. John's Episcopal Church in Haifa, respectively. The concert, an offering of praise to Jesus Christ, was first performed last Easter in Nazareth. The winter version of "From Annunciation to Resurrection" has added scripture readings to accompany the musical pieces of great composers while paintings of equally great masters project various phases of the life of Jesus on screen. Conductors Bishara Khell and Victor Kristosoff led the Quartet Multimedia Ensemble.

The Haifa audience expressed its appreciation at the professional and innovative performance that lifted spirits and helped renew one's faith. Several people enthusiastically encouraged the starting of a Sabeel Haifa chapter. For this occasion, the Rev. Naim Ateek, who had served as pastor in this coastal metropolis, sent a message from the USA.

The Nazareth branch was also active with international visitors. Habib Karam and Basil Jabali met with a group of twenty-five "Regina Tours" pilgrims from the UK on October 21. Violet Khoury met with the Bishop of Lyons and the accompanying French pilgrims on November 18.



# S n a p s h o t s

International Friends of Sabeel supports the work of Sabeel through education, advocacy, conferences, solidarity visits, partner-to-partner projects, and financial contributions. Regional chapters have been established creating a network of friends throughout the world who work in partnership with Sabeel to help bring about a just and durable peace for Palestine and Israel.



## Friends of Sabeel-Australia (FOS-OZ)

Members of Friends of Sabeel Australia Inc. were delighted that in November this year the Sydney Peace Prize was awarded to Dr. Hanan Ashrawi. The award stirred controversy in

Australia! But the Premier of the State of New South Wales gave a fine speech in making the presentation to Hanan, acknowledging the contribution she has made on behalf of those yearning for peace in the Middle East, a peace that encompasses a viable Palestinian state.

On Friday, November 28, Friends of Sabeel Australia Inc sponsored a public meeting at which the WCC produced video entitled "Ending Occupation - Voices for a Just Peace" was shown. It features support by Christian leadership in the region for a just peace and also several Jewish spokespersons supporting that endeavour.

Members will be seeking to give support to the forthcoming Sabeel conference in April, 2004 and planning to march behind a Friends of Sabeel Australia banner in the May Day March in Brisbane in 2004.



## Friends of Sabeel-Ireland (FOS-IR)

We have our brochures printed. We decided to go ahead even though we haven't got charity status as yet. We will send a few brochures and a letter to all those on our mailing list in the hope that they will subscribe. We plan to do a big mail drop after Christmas. We are selling crafts from Bethlehem at various church sales and craft fairs around the country.

Please note: Our new email address is fosirl@eircom.net

## Friends of Sabeel-North America (FOS-NA)

Another successful regional conference-this one in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, attracted 275 participants. Some of the presenters were: Rev. Naim Ateek, Fahed Abu-Akel, Jeff Halper, Don Wagner, Stephen Sizer, Stephen Zunes, Jean Zaru, Dorothy Jean Weaver. Joe Carr, 22, who witnessed the killing of Rachel

Corrie in Rafah Camp, performed his dramatic poem about Rachel. Conferences in the works for 2004 include Seattle, Salt Lake City, and a location in Minnesota (co-sponsored by Pax Christi USA).

Rev. Dick Toll, Chair of FOSNA, has been on the road since his retirement as rector at St. John's Episcopal Church in Milwaukie, Oregon. He has been traveling with Naim Ateek (in California, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, New York) making important contacts and developing local Sabeel groups.

FOSNA's Christmas Appeal will be a very special package sent to all donors. It includes a letter from our patron, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and a beautiful gift card with hand-stitched embroidery done by Palestinian women in the Bethlehem area. Check our website after Dec. 1 for details on ordering these beautiful cards (matching envelope included). FOSNA will launch a new quarterly newsletter in 2004.

Please note: FOSNA's new mailing address:

PO Box 9186

Portland, Oregon 97207



## Canadian Friends of Sabeel (CFOS)

Members across the country continue to work and pray in solidarity with Sabeel. Several visitors have come and we have organized public speaking events for

Diana Buttu, a Canadian lawyer working with the PA, and others, as well as attended talks by noted speakers such as Norman Finkelstein..

Towards the aim of advocacy, The Rev. Robert Assaly, Chair of CFOS, co-signed a letter to Bill Graham, Minister of Foreign Affairs, from the Middle East Working Group, a network of Canadian NGOs. The letter expressed special concerns about a just and humane peace for all peoples in the region and relayed support for the Minister's public statements about the nature and impact of the wall Israel is constructing as well as for voting for General Assembly Resolution A/RES/ES-10/13 of 21 October 2003, deciding that Israel's construction of the wall in Occupied Territories is illegal under international law and that it cease and be reversed. The letter also stated that "We deplore



all violence against Palestinians and Israelis and remain convinced that peace is possible only within a context of respect for fundamental human rights and the rule of international law” and ended with a request to address the humanitarian needs of those who have lost homes in Gaza, as was done when homes in Rafah were demolished in January 2002.



#### **Friends of Sabeel-UK (FOS-UK)**

hosted a successful visit of Jewish Theologian Marc Ellis with events ranging from peace studies, student seminars, to a Jewish group in Manchester. Marc and the Chair of Friends of Sabeel-UK, The Rev. Andrew Ashdown, met with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams in early December. Advent Reflections took place on the 8th December at Friends Meeting House, Liverpool. Plans for a conference in liaison with the Living Stones Network and the Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith relations continue. The event will be themed around Christian Zionism and take place on February 21st in London.

#### **Friends of Sabeel-Scandinavia (FOSS)**

A message from our Friends in Norway: “At the moment we are counting some 20 friends of Sabeel here in Norway. We started as a group a year ago, as we hosted the annual conference for Friends of Sabeel in Skandinavia (FOSS). The Rev. Naim Ateek, Director of Sabeel, and Janet Lahr Lewis, IFOS coordinator joined us from Jerusalem. They participated at the

Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed.  
*Martin Luther King, Jr.*

opening seminar which was arranged in Grefsen Church, at the Palestine Evening in the YMCA, Oslo, and at the Solidarity Service in Grefsen Church.

We receive and distribute “Cornerstone”, which we see as a most valuable source of information. On individual basis we advocate for Palestine and Palestinians: in our congregations, in the media, and wherever we meet people. We feel that our contribution is to bring to the public a biblical and Christian perspective on Palestine and Israel that is different from the traditional view. Sabeel inspires us and gives us good biblical and theological basis for our engagement. We see it as a miracle that Sabeel is able to inspire and bring hope in a situation that very often seems hopeless.

On Nov 9th an “Anti-Wall-demonstration” was held in Oslo, arranged by several organisations, among them YMCA and Norwegian Church Aid. The appeals were held by former prime minister Kaare Willoch and Dr. Marit Skjeggstad, a Friend of Sabeel. Their message got through to a wide audience.

“They asked him: Teacher, we know that you are right in what you say and teach: you are partial to no one but teach the way of God sincerely” (Luke.20:21). This could also be said about Sabeel, as you in the midst of conflict and tragedy bring your strong witness on justice, non-violence and peace, advocating the oppressed and occupied Palestinian people, but also the rights of the Jews. This is a true Christian position, so difficult to hold, but with no alternative for true followers of Christ. As Friends of Sabeel we pray that you will have the strength to hold on to this position, and to proclaim with even more force your important message to the churches and to the world.”

If you are interested in becoming a member of International Friends of Sabeel, please contact:  
IFOS coordinator - Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center, P.O, Box 49084 Jerusalem  
91491, Palestine via Israel

Tel: 972.2.532. 7136 Fax: 972.2.532.7137

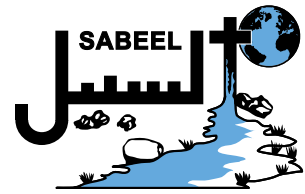
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## Purpose Statement of Sabeel

*Sabeel* is an ecumenical grassroots liberation theology movement among Palestinian Christians. Inspired by the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, this liberation theology seeks to deepen the faith of Palestinian Christians, promote unity among them, and lead them to act for justice and love. *Sabeel* strives to develop a spirituality based on justice, peace, non-violence, liberation, and reconciliation for the different national and faith communities. The word 'Sabeel' is Arabic for 'the way' and also a 'channel' or 'spring' of life-giving water.

*Sabeel* also works to promote a more accurate international awareness regarding the identity, presence, and witness of Palestinian Christians as well as their contemporary concerns. It encourages individuals and groups from around the world to work for a just, comprehensive, and enduring peace informed by truth and empowered by prayer and action.

For more information on *Friends of Sabeel* groups in your area please contact our International representatives or the Sabeel Center in Jerusalem.



## Sabeel

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