

# Jerusalem: An Earthly City of God

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## JERUSALEM: AN EARTHLY CITY OF GOD

Preface by Bishop Munib Younan  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land

This project invites participants to my home, Jerusalem. It is a city important to me not only because it is my home, but also because I am a Christian. It is the place where my Lord died and was raised from the dead. It is the place where the risen Christ brought the Holy Spirit to the church, Christ's body, so that we, too, could live and die and be raised in him. It is from Jerusalem that the church was sent out into all the world. So, Jerusalem witnesses to God's reconciliation with humanity.

But Jerusalem today also witnesses to violence, injustice, and religious extremism. It is at the center of the political conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. Although God placed humans on this earth to be stewards of the earth and of each other, this is not happening in Jerusalem. What part does each of us play in that conflict? Often I look at the situation and say, "How is it possible for there to be peace?" But then I remember that my God brings life out of nothing. My God exercises power through weakness, even through my weakness, even through yours. We Christians have been given "the mind of Christ" (Philippians 2:5) in whom God loved the world. Even though we can never give up our core idea that human actions in this world do not bring us salvation, nevertheless we care for the world that God loves. We know that all humans, whether Jewish, Christian, or Muslim, have been created in God's own image (Genesis 1:27), and therefore we share equal dignity. It is my dream that Jerusalem will become a shared city with equal rights and responsibilities for two nations, Israel and Palestine, and three faiths, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. I ask you to help us to realize this dream. As a Palestinian Christian bishop, I urge you to work and pray for the just peace of Jerusalem.

Let us enter a dialogue for life with each other. A dialogue for life involves learning about the pain of one another. It means looking together for ways to move beyond the pain. It means searching our own Scriptures deeply and being willing to be transformed. I myself attempt to do this with Jewish, Muslim, and Christian leaders through the recently formed Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land, which you will study in the pages that follow. I invite you to think about how you might engage in a dialogue for life in your own community and beyond. May God bless you. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

### A Word from the Author

In 2005-2006 I was privileged to receive a sabbatical from Texas Lutheran University and to spend six months of it living in Bethlehem and East Jerusalem. I was a participant for three months in the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel, and a research assistant for three months with Munib Younan, Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jordan and the Holy Land. It was out of Bishop Younan's growing concern about Jerusalem that this study guide on Jerusalem was written.

Carolyn Schneider, Associate Professor of Theology, Texas Lutheran University

## Leader's Guide

### **Purpose:**

This work is intended primarily for American churches. It is structured with sections of information leading into sections for discussion, and thus studying it in a group will be much more fruitful than studying it individually. I hope that the structure of the work enables your group to move at its own pace. There are twelve units designed to take between 45 minutes and one hour each. Sources of information are in parentheses; the full list of resources cited is at the end of the study. Almost all of the units are designed to be used with a computer, internet access, and a screen. The discussion sections, in particular, often involve using links to internet resources. Several units recommend breaking into small groups for activities. This is especially important if your group is large (more than 12 people). If you have a very small group, you may decide to work as a whole on those activities.

### **Your role:**

As a leader, your most important task will be to set a tone of respect for discussion early. Topics touching on the Middle East can spark strong emotions. You may want to consider having all participants agree to some guidelines for dialogue before you begin. Here are some guidelines that I condensed from the Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue Group in San Mateo, California. (If you would like to use the whole list, it is available at: <http://traubman.igc.org/dialogue2.htm>.) These guidelines are designed to prevent unhelpful debate. Your group may have some suggestions of their own to add.

#### 1. Listening

- a. Listen with equal respect to everyone.
- b. Avoid interrupting.

#### 2. Speaking

- a. Try not to dominate the conversation.
- b. Use considerate language.

#### 3. Discovering

- a. Move toward shared observations and discovery.
- b. If there is disagreement, explore it and search for areas of agreement.

4. One simple way to encourage respectful discussion is to sit in a circle. When all participants can see each other's faces, they are less likely to speak in a hostile way.

5. Two of the most common challenges facing discussion leaders are the unwillingness of some to speak and the over-willingness of others to fill the gap. Try to sit next to those who have a tendency to speak too often. Doing so will enable you to make eye contact with those who need more encouragement to speak. Puzzled

looks or bright eyes and raised eyebrows are signs that someone is thinking and might have something to ask or to contribute. Invite them to do so. Some of the reasons that people do not speak up are that they feel ignorant and do not want to appear “stupid,” or that they are afraid that their remarks will lead to disagreement, which they do not know how to handle. Setting a respectful tone in the beginning will help to alleviate these worries. You do not have to answer each question personally. Open the questions out for the whole group to ponder together.

6. At the end of the study there is an Appendix on the church “families” that are most prevalent in the Middle East. This could be used together with the Introduction and Unit 1, with Unit 3, or with Unit 12. I would encourage combining it with the Introduction and Unit 1 because it involves visiting a church body related to those of Middle Eastern Christians. That will provide your group with a living experience as they begin their study of Jerusalem.

### **Preparing for the Units:**

Below are suggestions for preparing and handling each of the twelve units. Reading through each unit a couple of weeks before your group is scheduled to study it will enable you to have all the materials ready and to get help if you need it. I also recommend encouraging the participants to read through each unit ahead of time so that they can do some thinking and exploring the internet on their own in preparation. If you are pressed for time, there are some units that could be combined: The Introduction and Unit 1 could be combined with Unit 2; Units 8 and 9 could also be combined.

### **INTRODUCTION AND UNIT 1: The Significance of Jerusalem**

#### **Materials needed:**

Bibles, markers, large paper

#### **Preparation:**

The Introduction explains the way in which this study guide on Jerusalem came about. It might be helpful for your group to understand the context of the study. Looking over the “Acknowledgment” section at the end of the study may also give you, as the leader, a little more background.

Unit 1 invites the participants to think about the images of Jerusalem with which they come to this study. It is always good to examine the ideas that we already have about a subject before exploring it further. The discussion activity begins with these words:

1. The word "Jerusalem" evokes many different images in people's minds. Take a few moments to think about what "Jerusalem" means to you. Is it a geographical place or a religious symbol? Is its story primarily historical or current for you? What does "Jerusalem" look like as you picture it? Is it a "holy" place? If not, why not? If so, what does it mean to call the city “holy”?

***For discussion: Share your thoughts about Jerusalem by drawing a picture of Jerusalem as you see it, or writing or bringing a story about Jerusalem that conveys what the city means to you. Make a list of the images of Jerusalem that emerge from your group's discussion. (Save your images and your group's list for future reference.)***

2. You may want to alert those who have signed up for the study about this activity ahead of time so that they can think ahead and perhaps bring something from home that best expresses what Jerusalem means to them.

3. It is important to save the work your group does for this unit. You will re-examine it in Unit 9.

### **UNIT 2: Jerusalem in the Jewish Tradition**

#### **Materials needed:**

Bibles; a computer with internet access, a projector, and a screen or blank wall

#### **Preparation:**

This section contains a fairly large amount of reading. Consider how you would like to approach this. One idea might be having participants voluntarily take turns reading paragraphs out loud and stopping for questions or discussion. (It is not a good idea to call on people to read aloud, since not everyone is confident about their reading skills.)

One of the activities for discussion involves looking up various biblical passages. Provide about 10 minutes for the groups to work. If you are looking at all of the passages together, provide about 20 minutes for this activity.

### **UNIT 3: Jerusalem in the Christian Tradition**

#### **Materials needed:**

Bibles; a large modern map showing Eastern Europe and the Middle East (or several maps if your group is large); a computer with internet access, a projector, and a screen or blank wall

#### **Preparation:**

This section contains a fairly large amount of reading. Consider how you would like to approach this. One idea might be having participants voluntarily take turns reading paragraphs out loud and stopping for questions or discussion. (It is not a good idea to call on people to read aloud, since not everyone is confident about their reading skills.)

The activity for discussion involves looking up Acts 2 in the Bible, finding the places it mentions on a map of biblical times, and discovering where these places are today on a modern map. Provide about 20 minutes for the groups to work.

### **UNIT 4: Jerusalem in the Muslim Tradition**

#### **Materials needed:**

A computer with internet access, a projector, and a screen or blank wall

#### **Preparation:**

This section contains a large amount of reading because it covers material that is very likely to be unfamiliar to the participants. Consider how you would like to approach

this. One idea might be having participants voluntarily take turns reading paragraphs out loud and stopping for questions or discussion. (It is not a good idea to call on people to read aloud, since not everyone is confident about their reading skills.) There are several words in this section that readers may not know how to pronounce. Ease their fears about this. Most of the words are pronounced the way they look. Here is a rough pronunciation guide for the words that might be troublesome (in the order in which they appear in the unit):

- a. al-Masjid al-Aqsa ("the furthest mosque [masjid]") = ahl-masJID ahl-AHKsah
- b. hijra ("the flight") = HIJra
- c. bayt al-maqdis ("House of the Holy") = BAIT ahl-makDISS
- d. surah = SOOra
- e. Haram al-Sharif = haRAM ahl-shaREEF
- f. al-Masjid al-Nabawi ("the mosque [masjid] of the prophet") = ahl-masJID ahl-naBAWee
- g. Salah al-Din = SaLAH ahl-DEEN
- h. minbar (pulpit) = MINbar
- i. al-Quds al-Sharif ("the holy, the noble") = ahl-KOODS ahl-shaREEF [KOODS rhymes with HOODS.]
- j. Mamluk = MAHMlook
- k. Madrasa (Islamic school) = maDRAHsa
- l. zawiya = zaWEEya
- m. Suleiman = SOOlaymahn
- n. millet = MILLet
- o. dhimmi = DIMMee

Participants are invited to look at the chapter in the Qur'an that speaks of Muhammad's journey to Jerusalem. It may be helpful for you to locate that site and have it ready before the session begins.

## **UNIT 5: Twentieth Century Developments**

### **Materials needed:**

A computer with internet access, a projector, and a screen or blank wall is suggested if you think that viewing some of the maps and documents to which this unit makes reference would be helpful for your group.

### **Preparation:**

This section contains a large amount of reading because it covers material that is very likely to be unfamiliar to the participants. Consider how you would like to approach this. One idea might be having participants voluntarily take turns reading paragraphs out loud and stopping for questions or discussion. (It is not a good idea to call on people to read aloud, since not everyone is confident about their reading skills.)

Leave at least 15 minutes at the end to discuss what participants have learned so far (in all the units up to unit 5) about Jerusalem that was new to them.

## **UNIT 6: Present Realities in Jerusalem**

### **Materials needed:**

A computer with internet access, a projector, and a screen or blank wall

### **Preparation:**

This section contains a large amount of reading because it covers material that is very likely to be unfamiliar to the participants. Consider how you would like to approach this. One idea might be having participants voluntarily take turns reading paragraphs out loud and stopping for questions or discussion. (It is not a good idea to call on people to read aloud, since not everyone is confident about their reading skills.)

Leave at least 20 minutes for the discussion questions at the end, since they require some reflective and imaginative thinking. Especially if your group tends to be slow to speak, you may want to give all the participants some time to think quietly about the questions before opening up the discussion. Some may want to jot down their thoughts on paper before sharing them.

## **UNIT 7: Challenges: The Intifadas**

### **Materials needed:**

A computer with internet access, speakers, a projector, and a screen or blank wall is suggested if you would like to view the material from the Parents Circle-Families Forum with your group.

**Preparation:**

This section contains a large amount of reading because it covers material that is very likely to be unfamiliar to the participants. Consider how you would like to approach this. One idea might be having participants voluntarily take turns reading paragraphs out loud and stopping for questions or discussion. (It is not a good idea to call on people to read aloud, since not everyone is confident about their reading skills.)

**UNIT 8: Challenges: The Separation Barrier****Materials needed and preparation:**

A computer with internet access, speakers, a projector, and a screen or blank wall. In this unit, in addition to viewing maps, you will be watching a 10-minute video called "Forbidden Family." This is downloadable from the ELCA's *Peace Not Walls* website (<http://www.elca.org/peacenotwalls/resources>). Try downloading it several days in advance on the computer that you will be using for the class to ensure that the necessary audio and visual tools are available on that computer. If you feel more confident about using a DVD player to show the film, you may work ahead of time to order it as a DVD by calling Mia Cortez at 1-800-638-3522, x2642. There is a user's guide that comes with the film and is also downloadable from the web, if you think that it might be helpful to spark discussion with your group. The website also contains an update on the Kasabreh family's situation.

**UNIT 9: Challenges: Christian Zionism****Materials needed:**

Your group's original representations of Jerusalem from Unit 1, and a computer with internet access, projector, and screen if you wish to view one of the websites concerning Christian Zionism.

**Preparation:**

Since the material presented is short, much of the time can be given to discussion. Participants may want to watch segments of Bill Moyers' "Journal" about Rev. John Hagee and his lobbying group, "Christians United for Israel" at home. I would not recommend showing whole segments during your discussion sessions, since these videos are between 10 and 20 minutes each. If you, as the discussion leader, preview these films online, you may find certain clips to show to the whole group if you think it would be helpful.

**UNIT 10: What Is Our God Doing in Jerusalem? – God's Word as Law Upholding Creation****Materials needed:**

Bibles; a blackboard and chalk or large paper and markers

**Preparation:**

The challenge of this unit will be the timing. There are three opportunities for discussion at various points. Making sure to keep each discussion between 10 and 15 minutes will ensure time for each topic to be discussed. If your group is large (more than 12 people), you may want to break into smaller groups (of about four) to look at the Ten Commandments. You can summarize everyone's application of the commandments to the situation in Jerusalem on the blackboard or paper.

**UNIT 11: What Is Our God Doing in Jerusalem? – God's Word as the Good News about Jesus Christ (Gospel)****Materials needed:**

Bibles

**Preparation:**

This section contains a large amount of reading because it covers significant theological material that most Christians consider the heart of the Christian faith. Consider how you would like to approach this. One idea might be having participants voluntarily take turns reading paragraphs out loud and stopping for questions or discussion. (It is not a good idea to call on people to read aloud, since not everyone is confident about their reading skills.)

The discussion material is quite open-ended, so be sure to leave at least 15 minutes to reflect on it together.

**UNIT 12: Peacemakers****Materials needed:**

A computer with internet access, a projector, and a screen to explore the *Peace Not Walls* website; a blackboard and chalk or large newsprint and markers

**Preparation:**

This unit presents the visions for peace of Christians, Muslims, and Jews who live in the Holy Land. The first discussion question allows the group to compare these visions. You may help them to see the similarities by creating three columns on the blackboard or newsprint ("Christian," "Muslim," and "Jewish") and filling in their observations under the appropriate column. Then create a space on the board or paper to summarize the commonalities.

The last discussion question will be pursued most effectively if the participants have explored it ahead of time. It asks the group to determine an action that they wish to take in support of peace. You may want to have everyone read this unit ahead of time so that they can explore the *Peace Not Walls* website on their own and come with ideas ready to share.

The action that they decide upon may require more active participation from the congregation as a whole. Make sure to involve the leadership of the congregation in

planning this action. Not only will this ensure that everyone is included in the process, but it will also ensure that all practical issues involved (such as financing, communication, or worship planning, for example) are identified and addressed.

<b>Lesson:</b> Jerusalem	<b>Unit I:</b> The Religious Significance of Jerusalem
<b>Academic Instruction</b>	

## Key Points

1. Jerusalem is a city which is highly significant in the three Abrahamic religions:
  - a. Judaism
  - b. Christianity
  - c. Islam
2. Yet the significance of Jerusalem differs between these religions and even among different people and groups within the same religion.
3. Those who live in Jerusalem feel the collisions of these different ideas about the place and must determine how to live faithfully in their present context.

### **Activity 2:** Individual Activity: A Picture of Jerusalem

The leader passes out materials needed – markers and drawing paper.

*Step 1:* The word "Jerusalem" evokes many different images in people's minds. Take a few moments to think about what "Jerusalem" means to you. Is it a geographical place or a religious symbol? Is its story primarily historical or current for you? What does "Jerusalem" look like as you picture it? Is it a "holy" place? If not, why not? If so, what does it mean to call the city "holy"?

*Step 2:* Draw a picture of Jerusalem as you see it, or write or bring a story about Jerusalem that conveys what the city means to you. Share your thoughts and pictures or stories of Jerusalem with each other.

*Step 3:* Listen to these descriptions from Palestinian Christians living in or near Jerusalem.

Pastor Mitri Raheb of Christmas Lutheran Church in Bethlehem describes his images of Jerusalem.

- a. It was a place of memories for him centered around the old walled city where he went almost daily as a teenager.
- b. What came to mind was its narrow streets, different spices and smells in the market, carrot juice, kaek (bread rolled in sesame seeds), churches, the Dome of the Rock, and friends.
- c. His grandmother used to dress in her finest old Bethlehem gown when she went to the city, as she called it.

Reverend Ibrahim Azar, pastor of the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Jerusalem, describes his images of Jerusalem.

- d. It is a holy city because of the life of Jesus and of the Christian church there.
- e. No matter where people come from, they "go up" to Jerusalem.
- f. It is a city with an international flair, open to all, where one can go from the Middle Ages to the 21<sup>st</sup> century within a five-minute walk.

*Step 4:* Make a list of the images of Jerusalem that emerge from your group's discussion. (Save your images and your group's list for future reference.)

## Activities

## Academic Instruction

## Part 1: Key Points

1. Mystically, the significance of the city of Jerusalem for Jewish people goes back to Abraham.
  - a. Genesis 22 tells the story of Abraham's obedience to God's command to sacrifice Isaac, who is rescued at the last minute, on Mount Moriah.
  - b. Chronicles identifies this place of obedience with the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, which David purchased for the Temple to be built by Solomon (2 Chron. 3:1).
  - c. Thus, for Jews, the city, especially the memory of the Temple, represents a link with Abraham, the father of the faith through his son Isaac.
  - d. It is a place to meet God within a deep relationship.
2. Jerusalem became politically significant for the Jews during the reign of King David.
  - a. Before that, it had been a Canaanite city of the Jebusite tribe.
  - b. King David made it his political capital because it was centrally located and politically neutral, with no previous connection to any Israelite tribe.
3. King David made it the religious capital when he brought the ark of the LORD (Ten Commandments) into Jerusalem.
  - a. Mount Zion, upon which the city of Jerusalem was built, became the new Mount Sinai, seat of the covenanted obligations between God and the people (McConville).
  - b. David's son, Solomon, built a Temple to house the ark.
  - c. Jews went to this Temple annually on the three major pilgrimage festivals
    - i. Sukkoth – a harvest festival of thanksgiving and a remembrance of the time spent wandering in the wilderness
    - ii. Pesach – Passover, recalling the Exodus from slavery in Egypt
    - iii. Shavuot – Pentecost, both a harvest festival and a celebration of the giving of the Law to Moses.
4. After Solomon's death the kingdom split.
  - a. Northern kingdom – Israel with Samaria as its capital
  - b. Southern kingdom – Judah with its capital in Jerusalem
  - c. 721 BCE, the Assyrian Empire defeated Israel, but its armies were turned back by a plague before they could take Jerusalem.
  - d. Judah was in a desperate situation and corruption increased in Jerusalem.
  - e. God said, "I will reject this city that I have chosen, Jerusalem, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there" (2 Kings 23:27).
  - f. 586 BCE Jerusalem fell to the Babylonian Empire
    - i. The highest class citizens were taken into exile in Babylon.
    - ii. The poorest remained in the land.
    - iii. Solomon's Temple was destroyed.
5. The loss of Jerusalem and its Temple created a deep theological crisis for the Jewish people.
  - a. Much of the Hebrew Bible was written during this time as the people struggled to understand their relationship with God.
  - b. The Psalms express this anguish.
    - i. Psalm 102 asks God to rebuild Jerusalem "so that the name of the LORD may be declared in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem, when peoples gather together, and kingdoms, to worship the LORD" (verses 21-22).
    - ii. Psalm 137:1, 5, "By the rivers of Babylon – there we sat down and there we wept when we remembered Zion. If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither!"
6. The prophets helped the people to interpret what was happening to them.
  - a. They portrayed the fall of Jerusalem as a purging.
  - b. God would remove the sin of the people and restore them in a new and glorious way.

**Activity 1:** Group Activity: The Prophetic Description of the New Jerusalem

**Preparation:** Pass out chart paper/butcher paper and markers. Divide into three groups.

**Step 1:**

The Prophets Description of the New Jerusalem

Read the assigned Bible passages. Each group will list three ways the prophets described the days of the new Jerusalem in their group's Bible verses.

Group 1 - Isaiah 2:2-4 and 40:1-11

Group 2 - Micah 4:1-7 and Zephaniah 3:11-13

Group 3 - Zechariah 8:1-3 and 9:9-12

**Step 2:** Compare each group's list with the others. Using the material from all three groups, create a description of the new Jerusalem.

**Part 2: Key Points**

1. When the Persian Empire defeated the Babylonian Empire, King Cyrus allowed the Jews to return.
  - a. The Jews rebuilt the Temple and the city walls.
  - b. They regained sovereignty only later and only briefly after the death of Alexander the Great.
  - c. During their rule in Jerusalem, the Greeks had defiled the Temple; the Romans destroyed it in 70 CE in retaliation for a revolt.
  - d. The remains of this second Temple are the central point of worship and reverence for Jews in Jerusalem today.

**Activity 2:** Review picture of the Western Wall

For a picture of the Western Wall, see [http://www3.nationalgeographic.com/places/photos/photo\\_jerusalem\\_jerusalem.html](http://www3.nationalgeographic.com/places/photos/photo_jerusalem_jerusalem.html).

**Leader:** *What are your reflections as you see the Western Wall?*

2. Noting that "the centrality of Jerusalem to Jewish faith" is "common to all Jews," Yitzhak Reiter of the Institute for Israeli Arab Studies and of the Hebrew University writes:  
For the Jewish people Jerusalem is not simply a city containing holy places or commemorating holy events.  
The city, as such, is holy and has, for at least two and a half millennia, served as the symbol of the historic existence of a people hunted, humiliated, and massacred, but never despairing of the hope and promise of its ultimate restoration...  
The fact that the [second] Temple was destroyed and Jerusalem was controlled by non-Jews affected Jewish worship and prayers. Prayer was and is performed facing the direction of Jerusalem and special mourning observed on *Tish B'Av*, the date of the destruction of both Temples...Jews continued to pray for the restoration of Jerusalem on earth: the thrice daily *'Amida* prayer has a section devoted to this plea, and the Passover *Seder* and the Day of Atonement service both end with the words "Next year in Jerusalem" (Reiter 54 and 57).

**Activity 3:** Closure: Each group verbally shares why Jerusalem is so important to the Jews.

## Activities

## Academic Instruction

## Part 1: Key Points

1. The first Christian community was gathered in Jerusalem around Jesus' disciples after Jesus' resurrection.
  - a. Christians acknowledge the same Hebrew Scriptures as Jews do, so the city of Jerusalem comes to them with the same history of promise and failure, destruction and restoration, reality and vision.
  - b. It is more complex and conflicted by the experience of Jesus in Jerusalem.
  - c. W. D. Davis summarizes the role of Jerusalem in the New Testament by saying that the "witness of the New Testament...sits loose to the land, Jerusalem, the Temple" because it centers on Christ (Davies 78).
2. When Jesus entered Jerusalem for the last time, he chose to come from the Mount of Olives east of the city for the following reasons:
  - a. This enacted the return of King David to the city after Absalom's rebellion (2 Samuel 15:30 and 20:2b).
  - b. The return of God to the Temple after the exile in Ezekiel's vision (Ezekiel 11:23 and 43:1-5).
  - c. The vision of Zechariah about the coming day of the Lord (Zechariah 9:9-12 and 14:4-5).
3. Jesus went to the Temple, where he drove out those engaged in the buying and selling of animals and currency necessary for the sacrifices.
  - a. Jesus was challenged by the scribes and elders who wanted to know by what authority he did these things (Mark 11:27-28 and John 2:18).
  - b. In John's gospel, which situates this event early in Jesus' ministry, Jesus' response is, "Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up' ..., speaking of the Temple of his body" (John 2:19 and 21).
4. Jesus was executed because he was a threat to those in power (both Jewish and Roman).
  - a. God raised him up.
  - b. When Jesus appeared to his disciples in Jerusalem after his resurrection, he called them to witness, saying, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah [the Christ in Greek] is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Luke 24:46-47)
  - c. Christians came to understand Jesus' death to have been his bodily bearing of the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple at the hands of Gentiles and by the word of God's judgment.
  - d. When God raised him from the dead, the cataclysm was over and Paul could write: "For our sake [God] made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21).
    - i. The means for coming to be "in Christ" is the gift of the Holy Spirit, Jesus' own breath (John 20:21-22).
    - ii. For those who are part of the body of Christ in this way, "everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation..." (2 Corinthians 5:17-18).
5. Even though new Christian communities began to form in many places, they all acknowledged their mother, the church in Jerusalem.
  - a. Paul was intent on spending Pentecost in Jerusalem before heading to Rome (Acts 20:16). He was bringing with him money collected from the Gentile congregations in Macedonia, Achaia, and Galatia for the church in Jerusalem (Romans 15:25, 1 Corinthians 16:1-4).
  - b. It was in Jerusalem, also, that disputes were resolved in the early church (Acts 15).

## Academic Instruction

### Part 1: Key Points

#### Activity 1: Group Reading/Sharing

*Step 1:* Read Acts, chapter 2 together as a group. Pay particular attention to Holy Spirit's activities at Pentecost.

*Step 2:* The leader writes the following questions on chalkboard or chart tablet while three groups form. Each group takes one question, decides on the answer, and shares their answer with the entire class.

1. Describe how the Holy Spirit's activity at Pentecost turned the disciples ("followers" or "students") into apostles ("ones who are sent out") with power from God.
2. What was their message?
3. What was their power?

*Step 3:* Most Bibles have a map of the New Testament world in the back. In your small groups, take a look at all the places from which people had come to Jerusalem, as listed in Acts 2:5-13. It was back to these places that the story of Jesus first spread and people became Christian. (If you do not have a Bible lands map available, you can look on the web at < <http://www.bibles.com/brcpages/diggingin-maps-roman> > for the map made available by the American Bible Society.) Allow five to ten minutes for this activity.

*Step 4:* Compare the ancient map to a modern map to see what these places are called today.

*Step 5:* As a whole group, describe the church as it emerges from Acts 2.

*Step 6:* Reflect on how the early Christians viewed Jerusalem.

## Academic Instruction

### Part 2: Key Points

1. When Rome destroyed Jerusalem and its Temple in 70 CE, many Christians (although they were pacifist) were driven into diaspora along with the rest of the Jewish population.
  - a. Jews mounted armed resistance again and again but were finally defeated and driven out of Jerusalem by Emperor Hadrian in 135 CE.
  - b. Hadrian then declared that no circumcised people could enter Jerusalem.
  - c. The people were dispersed to the Galilee area, and throughout Europe, western Asia, and northern Africa.
  - d. Jerusalem was renamed Aelia Capitolina, and the Roman gods were to be worshiped there.
  - e. A shrine to Venus was built over the tomb of Jesus.
  - f. Hadrian's successors did not enforce the ruling, however, and Jews and Christians returned in small numbers.
2. In the second and third centuries CE it was not easy to be Christian anywhere in the Roman Empire.
  - a. Christianity was illegal.
  - b. As conflict with the Roman imperial government increased, it became difficult for Christians to live in or to travel to Jerusalem.
  - c. It became important to emphasize in their theology that the church could exist truly anywhere.
  - d. Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea and church historian (260-340 CE), was tapping into the realities of this era of persecution when he "held to a spiritualizing of the land with little significance for the physical place" (Younan 61).
    - i. He taught Christians to dwell not on the site of Jesus' suffering and death but on Jesus' resurrection and glory, especially as manifested in the people of the scattered church.
    - ii. The fact that Jesus had been rejected and killed in Jerusalem seemed to seal the indictments brought against the city by the prophets.
    - iii. The fact that the resurrected Jesus had sent his apostles out everywhere seemed to diminish the importance of Jerusalem.
    - iv. This strand of thought is expressed by the Palestinian theologian Naim Ateek in this way: "No longer is it a matter of the sacredness of the city of Jerusalem; it is the sacredness of the people of God wherever they are. No longer is it a matter of the physical presence of an impressive Temple, but the presence of 'living Temples' of God in whom God's spirit dwells" (Ateek, "Jerusalem in Islam and for Palestinian Christians," 139).
3. Christians experienced occasional bouts of active persecution until Constantine became emperor, gaining control of both the western and eastern parts of the empire by 324.
  - a. He legalized Christianity.
  - b. After Christianity was made legal, pilgrimages increased, and churches to mark the holy sites were built.
  - c. Constantine's mother, Helena, was a Christian.
    - i. She took part in the growing trend of making a pilgrimage to the places of importance in the Bible and in the life of Jesus.
    - ii. It was she who commissioned the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, over the cave where local Christians commemorated Jesus' birth.
    - iii. Helena also had the Temple of Venus destroyed and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre built in Jerusalem, over the site of Jesus' crucifixion on Golgotha and over the tomb of his resurrection.

**Activity 2:** Review photos of the Holy Sepulchre Church

[For photos of the Holy Sepulchre Church, see <http://www.holysepulchre.com/>.]

**Leader:** Describe what the church looks like to you. What symbols do you see? How does it make you feel?

## Academic Instruction

### Part 3: Key Points

1. During this age of imperial Christianity, there came to be threats to the theology of incarnation (“embodiment,” referring to the Son of God’s taking flesh in Jesus).
  - a. Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem (315-386 CE), in contrast to Eusebius of earlier times, dwelt on the physical and human reality of Christ, still tangible in place and in sacrament.
  - b. The cross came to be understood not merely as a shameful episode in Jesus’ life and Jerusalem’s history.
    - i. Rather, it was to Christ’s glory that he died in this way and in this place in order to save the world.
    - ii. That Jesus lived in a real time and a real place in this world is of fundamental importance to Christian faith.
    - iii. Robert Wilker notes that in the eighth century John of Damascus, a monk from the Mar Saba monastery in the desert just east of Bethlehem, called such places as Jesus’ tomb “ ‘places in which God had accomplished our salvation’ ” (Wilker 252).
    - iv. When an anonymous Palestinian monk from around the same time period wrote a treatise called “Traces of Christ,” he said, “ ‘Christ has given us...*traces* of himself and *holy places* in this world as an *inheritance* and a *pledge* of the kingdom of heaven...which he promised to us’ .” Through these places Christ has given “ ‘blessing, sanctification, access to him, pardon for sins..., spiritual joy...and witnesses that confirm what is written in the book of the Gospel’ ” (Quoted in Wilker 253).
2. Pilgrims to Jerusalem have found that seeing and touching the solid realities of the place where Jesus lived makes the Bible come alive to them.
  - a. Anba Abraham, the Metropolitan of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East, echoes the angel addressing the women at Jesus’ tomb, “Come, see the place where he lay...” (Matthew 28:6).
  - b. It is an invitation to experience “the events of the salvation drama” (Abraham 108).

### Activity 3: Class Discussion

**Leader:** Have any of you been to these church buildings? If so, share your experiences. Is it important to you to be able to visit the places where Jesus walked?

3. By the 5<sup>th</sup> century, Christians had become a theologically diverse majority in Jerusalem.
  - a. These were tumultuous times.
    - i. The western half of the Roman Empire had already fallen to numerous tribal armies from northern and eastern Europe.
    - ii. The remaining eastern Roman Empire (known as the Byzantine Empire) was continuously at war with its eastern neighbor, the Persian Empire, where many Christians also lived.
    - iii. The Persians gained control of Jerusalem in 614, destroying the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.
    - iv. The Byzantine Empire retook the territory in 628, but not for long.
    - v. There was a new power to be reckoned with.
      1. In 636 Islamic Arab armies under the caliph ‘Umar came up from the south and defeated the Byzantine forces.
      2. They took the southern half of the Byzantine Empire, including Palestine.

### Activity 4: Closure

**Leader:** Why is Jerusalem relevant to Christianity?

## Activities

## Academic Instruction

## Key Points – Part 1

1. The significance of Jerusalem for Muslim people, like Jewish people, goes back to Abraham, whom Muslims also consider their ancestor in the monotheistic faith.
  - a. Abraham is held up as a model of Islam (which means "submission to God").
  - b. Thus, Judaism (like Christianity) has a special status for Muslims.
  - c. Muslims recognize many of the faithful patriarchs and matriarchs (especially Hagar) and prophets of the Jewish heritage, and see these continued in Jesus and his mother Mary.
  - d. However, they believe that both of these religious traditions became corrupted through time.
  - e. The worship of the one God was reintroduced by Muhammad when he began to receive revelations from God through the angel Gabriel in the year 610 CE in Arabia.
  - f. Since Muhammad was illiterate, it was his followers who took his dictation to record the Qur'an ("the Recitation").
2. The polytheistic people of Mecca felt threatened by the call to give up their gods, and they became violent, so Muhammad and his followers fled to Medina.
  - a. This flight (622 CE) marks the official year one of the Islamic calendar.
  - b. In Medina the Islamic community grew in number and in power.
  - c. Its army was able to defeat the people of Mecca before the prophet died in 632 CE.
  - d. The Ka'ba, which was built by Abraham and his son, Ishmael (Qur'an, Surah 2:127), and which had been a shrine in Mecca for a long time already, became the focal point for monotheistic worship.
  - e. All Muslims who are able are required to make a pilgrimage to the Ka'ba at least once in their lives as a participation in the faithfulness of Abraham. It is the most holy site in Islam, with Medina second.
3. Jerusalem is the third most holy site because of a journey on which Muhammad was taken.
  - a. "Glory to God Who did take His Servant for a journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque [al-Masjid al-Aqsa] whose precincts We did bless, - in order that We might show him some of Our Signs!" (Qur'an, Surah 17:1).
  - b. Islamic scholars identified this "farthest mosque" with its current location in Jerusalem.
  - c. From there, Muhammad ascended alive into heaven.
  - d. In heaven, Muhammad received "the Muslim traditions and rites of worship,...and was graced with the divine vision" (Nusseibeh 14). He returned to share these with his community.
  - e. Surah 70 describes these traditions and rites.
  - f. It is in Jerusalem, where heaven meets earth, that God's final judgment is expected to take place, and where the resurrection of the dead will occur.
  - g. After the *hijra* (flight to Medina), Muslims prayed in the direction of Jerusalem for nearly two years before the direction was changed to Mecca (Qur'an, Surah 2:144-150).
  - h. Originally, Muslims called Jerusalem "*bayt al-maqdis*," which means, "House of the Holy."

### Activity 1: Small Group Activity

Step 1: Visit <http://www.quranexplorer.com/>. Click on "Launch Quran Explorer". Together, read Sura/Chapter 17: Al-Isra, concerning Muhammad's journey to Jerusalem.

Step 2: Leader writes the following two questions and statement on the board/chart:

1. Which, in order of importance, are the three most holy sites listed in the Quran?
2. Why, and in which order of importance, is Jerusalem included in this list?

Each group takes one question/statement, decides upon an answer, and presents findings to the class.

### Key Points – Part 2

1. Muhammad had been not only a religious leader but also a political leader.
  - a. After his death, political leadership was assumed by men called *caliphs*.
  - b. There was a dispute over who these caliphs should be, which resulted in the division between Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims.
  - c. For our purposes, it is enough to know that under the caliphs, armies conquered Arabia, northern Africa, the Persian Empire, and most of the eastern Roman Empire, thus expanding the political domain within which Islam was practiced.
  - d. Jerusalem was taken in the year 638 CE by the Caliph 'Umar, who was shown the rock from which Muhammad ascended. On this site in 691 the Dome of the Rock was built.

**Activity 2:** Entire class analyzes photo of the Dome on the Rock

<http://www.digitalrailroad.net/sabellaart/Common/PhotoDetailPage.aspx?msa=0&pid=10793655&slid=cd8de73a-9906-4f3c-a4d4-96a36e035649&slididx=226&lid=0&rstid=b444ade7-616e-4967-8e3d-d4c040794987&aid=1>.

2. The Al-Aqsa Mosque was built between 705 and 715 CE.
  - a. Its name now refers both to the mosque and to the plaza on which it stands, otherwise known as the Haram al-Sharif.
  - b. "Al-masjid al-Aqsa" means "the farthest mosque," going back to the Qur'anic account of Muhammad's night journey.
  - c. Indeed, for Muslims, at times Al-Aqsa refers not only to the mosque and its immediate surroundings but also to the city of Jerusalem itself.

### Activity 3: Analyze Photo of Al-Aqsa Mosque

Step 1: For a photo of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, see <http://www.islamicfinder.org/gallery/displayimage.php?album=22&pos=64>

Step 2: Read and respond to the following selection from Dr. Mustafa Abu Sway:

The importance of Al-Aqsa Mosque in the life of Muslims is reflected in the...traditions of the Prophet. One of these traditions...makes it clear that traveling in order to visit mosques for religious purposes is permitted to three mosques only: Al-Masjid Al-Haram (in Mecca), Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi (in Medina) and Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa (in Jerusalem). It is for this reason that prior to the 1967 war, ... many Muslims used to perform Hajj [pilgrimage] to Mecca and visit Medina, and then visit the third most holy site in Islam, Al-Aqsa Mosque. Many would settle in Jerusalem because of its sanctity. There are many neighborhoods and lodges that still carry the names of the countries from which these pilgrims came (Abu Sway 10).

3. Under the Muslim caliphates, Jews and Christians were given a special status as "People of the Book" (the Torah and the Gospel).

- a. They were allowed to follow their religion but not to convert Muslims.
  - b. Many Christians converted to Islam, but even those Christians who did not convert became Arabized, adopting the Arabic language and culture.
  - c. Christians rebuilt the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at this time.
  - d. During these centuries Christians throughout the Muslim world gained important roles in education, health care, and business, roles which they carry still today.
  - e. The monasteries especially flourished as centers of Christian life, learning, and hospitality to travelers.
4. When the Seljuk Turks (who were Sunni Muslims from Central Asia) took over Palestine, and much of the Byzantine Empire as well, in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the Byzantine emperors felt threatened and asked for help from the west, which they came to regret.
- a. In 1095 Pope Urban II called for a crusade to liberate the Holy Land.
  - b. In 1099 the crusaders entered Jerusalem and slaughtered many of its inhabitants, including the Jewish community, which had sought refuge in the synagogue.
  - c. Of the events at the al-Aqsa Mosque (which was known in the west as the Temple of Solomon), one crusader wrote this:  
 “Some of our men cut off the heads of their enemies...others tortured them longer by casting them into flames. Piles of heads, hands, and feet were to be seen in the streets of the city. It was necessary to pick one’s way over the bodies of men and horses. But these were small matters compared to what happened to the Temple of Solomon...If I tell the truth it would exceed your belief. So let it be enough to say this much, at least, that in the Temple and Porch of Solomon, men rode in blood up to their knees and bridle reins” (Quoted in Wagner, *Dying in the Land of Promise*, 67-68).
  - d. The Al-Aqsa Mosque was converted into a church.
5. Don Wagner summarizes the impact of the crusader period on the local population as follows:
- a. “During the Crusader kingdom’s rule in Palestine, the Jewish community was nearly obliterated with tiny communities remaining in Galilee. Most Muslims were executed, escaped, deported, or became slaves to the Crusaders. Palestinian Christians were allowed to live within their national groups but under Frankish Crusader rule” (Wagner, *Dying in the Land of Promise*, 68).
  - b. The crusaders evicted the Orthodox Patriarch and put a Latin [Roman Catholic] Patriarch in his place.

**Activity 4: Group Oral Discussion**

*Commissioned by the Pope with promises of full forgiveness and salvation, the Crusaders’ motto was “God wills it,” and their symbol was the cross. What might the cross have come to mean to Muslims in Jerusalem as a result of the Crusades?*

6. Less than 100 years later, in 1187, on the very day commemorating Muhammad’s night journey, Salah al-Din led his troops up from Egypt to recapture Jerusalem.
- a. One of Salah al-Din’s acts was to readmit Jews into the city officially for the first time since Hadrian officially expelled them in 135.
  - b. The Orthodox Patriarch was restored in 1250.
7. Salah al-Din restored and re-consecrated the al-Aqsa Mosque, donating a magnificent new pulpit (*minbar*). As pilgrimage and immigration to the city increased it “quickly took on the character of a city dominated by Muslims” (Wessels 55).
- a. Jerusalem came to be known as al-Quds al-Sharif (“the holy, the noble”), shortened today to al-Quds.
  - b. The Egyptian Mamluk dynasty took over Palestine in 1250, driving the last of the crusaders out of their remaining strongholds.
  - c. “The opulence of both the Mameluke state and the court encouraged the undertaking of various types of buildings, with a particular enthusiasm for religious institutions. Due to this commitment, the holy city of Jerusalem (al-Quds) particularly flourished. Forty four *madrasas* (Islamic schools) and twenty *zawiyas* (buildings especially for Sufis, the mystic school of Islam) received generous donations. ...Inspired by the official status of both the philosophy and the message of Islam, artists and architects executed daring, delicate compositions where symmetry and geometry prevail” (Alternative Tourism Group 95-96).

**Activity 5:**

Together, summarize the significance of Jerusalem for Muslims.

8. The Ottoman [Turkish] Empire gained control of the region in 1517.
  - a. They had already conquered the remains of the Byzantine Empire and made its capital, Constantinople, into their own, renamed Istanbul.
  - b. It was the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman who built the wall replicated today around the Old City of Jerusalem.
  - c. Suleiman also restored to Jews the right to pray at the Western Wall, the remains of the second Temple's walls. Prior to that, they had worshiped only in synagogues.
  
9. The Ottomans instituted the *millet* system of administration in which the Patriarchs became the administrative heads of the Christian community, which was considered a minority nation, a *dhimmi* people, like the Jews.
  - a. *Dhimmi* people lived together in their designated areas.
  - b. One of the Patriarch's tasks was to collect taxes from the Christian community.
  - c. These taxes could be very high, and they became a problem for landowners in particular. One practice that has serious repercussions even today was the decision by some landowners to officially register less land than they actually owned in order to minimize their property taxes.
  - d. Palestinians whose ancestors bought land during the Ottoman time struggle today to prove their ownership using these Ottoman records.
  
10. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Egypt began to pose a threat to the Ottomans, gaining control of Palestine briefly from 1832-1840. In defense, the Ottomans began to grant "capitulations" or privileges to European countries in exchange for their support.
  - a. Often these countries would ask for oversight of Christian sites or Christian communities, such as Russia vying with Greece for protection of the Orthodox Christians, and France getting custodial responsibilities over many holy sites for the Franciscans.
  - b. The frustrating result of this was that Palestinian Muslims came to be suspicious of Palestinian Christians for their ties to foreign powers, sometimes the very powers who had been involved in the Crusades.
  - c. Along with the German and English political presence in the city came Lutheran and Anglican churches.
  - d. "A joint British Anglican and Prussian Evangelical bishopric was established in Jerusalem. ...The Anglicans and Lutherans worked together as one body until 1886 when the Prussian Lutherans went their own way, partly due to political and theological differences in Europe between Prussia and England.
  - e. The German Lutherans focused their efforts on social work and education at a time when the British Anglicans were emphasizing conversion" (<http://www.elcjh.org/mission.asp>).
  - f. Services such as hospitals, schools, and orphanages were established through which some Palestinians (primarily Greek Orthodox) became Protestant. This inter-Christian conversion remains a source of tension among Palestinian churches.
  - g. To reduce the friction, the Ottomans wrote a set of regulations called the *Status Quo*, which delineate in detail the responsibilities and boundaries of each of the churches in their use of church buildings.
  - h. These are still in effect today.
  - i. One of the most well-known stipulations of the *Status Quo*, for example, is that the old, respected Muslim families of Nusseibeh and Joudeh hold the keys to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. It is they who open and close the building, minding the door during the day.
  
11. Meanwhile, as in other parts of the world, a process of urbanization was happening in Palestine, with people leaving their rural villages for the city.
  - a. Jerusalem expanded in population and underwent a process of modernization.
  - b. Since after 1856, when non-Ottoman citizens were allowed to purchase land in Jerusalem, part of the expansion was due to the influx of European Jews buying property.
  - c. During World War I, Ottoman rule became oppressive as heavy taxes were laid on the people and young men were drafted into the army.
  - d. In 1920, it came to an end and a new challenge emerged as the League of Nations put Palestine under the guardianship of Great Britain.

#### **Activity 6: Small groups**

**Preparation:** Have ready paper and pens in each group.

Step 1: List some of the events and issues that have caused tension between religions in Jerusalem, especially from the 16<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Step 2: List some of the actions and practices that enabled peaceful coexistence between religions in Jerusalem, especially from the 16<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Step 3: Share each group's lists with the whole group and consider together what seems to make for peace in Jerusalem.

## Activities

## Academic Instruction

1. The 20<sup>th</sup> century brought massive changes for Jerusalem.
  - a. Developments began which are still working themselves out today.
  - b. This was the time of the shift from Ottoman rule to British rule.
  - c. It was also the time of increasing Jewish immigration in the face of European anti-Semitism, which stirred the Zionist movement in its varied forms.
2. At some times and places during their diaspora, Jews were accepted and prospered, for example, in Spain under Muslim rule from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries.
  - a. But in many times and places, they faced persecution, for example, during the crusades, during the conquest of Spain and Portugal by Christian monarchs, during the Russian pogroms, and above all, during the Holocaust.
  - b. These persecutions caused the Jewish people, especially those scattered outside of Palestine, to feel that they were in exile once again, waiting for the fulfillment of God's promises through the prophets.
3. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century a secular Austro-Hungarian Jew named Theodor Herzl (1860-1904), became appalled at the treatment of Jews in Europe and was spurred to action.
  - a. He wrote a book entitled *Der Judenstaat*, arguing that Jews constituted a nation and thus, as all nations, they had a right to a homeland where they would be safe.
  - b. Although Herzl was open to different locations for this homeland, in time the movement he started, called Zionism, focused on Palestine.
  - c. This was a political movement and was opposed by many religious Jews at the time.
  - d. It has spawned what Jewish historian Hooshang Meshkinpour calls an internal "crisis of Jewish identity," a debate that continues today within the Jewish community over whether Jews are a political, a religious, an ethnic group, or some combination (Meshkinpour 292).
4. Zionism found its most welcoming environment in England.
  - a. Several key figures in British politics at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries were Christian Zionists, that is, they believed that the Hebrew prophets were describing the final reign of Jesus, the Messiah, after his second coming.
  - b. These prophetic promises had not yet been fulfilled.
  - c. Their fulfillment would begin with the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine.
  - d. Among these figures was Lord Anthony Ashley Cooper, seventh Earl of Shaftesbury, who described Palestine as "a country without a nation for a nation without a country" (Quoted in Anderson 103). In the next generation, British Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour made the realization of Zionist hopes a goal of his government.
5. During the British Mandate over Palestine Jewish immigration into Palestine increased greatly.
  - a. For example, between 1918 and 1939, the Jewish population of Palestine grew from 8% to 33% of the total population (Wagner, *Dying in the Land of Promise*, 128).
  - b. Some of the Jews who arrived in Palestine at that time brought with them the spirit of the Jewish philosopher Asher Ginzberg. In 1891, he had written, "Palestine is not an uninhabited land and...Jews...who settle in Palestine must above all seek to win the friendship of the Palestinians, by approaching them courteously and with respect" (Quoted in Wagner, *Dying in the Land of Promise*, 89).
  - c. In 1925, these "spiritual Zionists" organized themselves into a small group called *Brit Shalom* ("Covenant of Peace"), under the leadership of Judah Magnes, the first president of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

6. These views never became persuasive enough to carry events at the time, but there were and remain people in the Jewish community who interpret Zionism in this way.
  - a. Most early Zionist communities in Palestine were exclusively Jewish, however.
  - b. When land was purchased from wealthy absentee landowners, the Arab Palestinians who lived and worked on the land were sometimes forced out.
7. Muslims and Christians struggled together to assert their identity as Palestinians.

### **Activity 1: Small Group Activity**

Step 1: Summarize the developments that happened under British rule.

Step 2: Each group summarizes on butcher paper the developments that happened under British rule.

Step 3: Each group presents their findings to the class for discussion.

8. Great Britain withdrew from Palestine in 1947.
  - a. At its instigation, the newly formed United Nations developed a plan to partition Palestine into a Jewish sector over 56% of the land and an Arab sector over 43% of the land.
  - b. Jerusalem was to be an international city, separate from both sectors.
  - c. The plan, which was favored by the mainstream Zionists, was narrowly adopted as General Assembly Resolution 181, causing violence to break out in Palestine, since the Arab Palestinians were at that time 66% of the population and owned 94% of the land, including 75% of the land that was to become the Jewish sector, where Arab Palestinians made up 48% of the population. Arab Palestinians had favored a single, independent, multi-religious country with a secular government.
  - d. (For a map of the Partition Plan, see <[http://www.passia.org/palestine\\_facts/MAPS/pdf/1947-un-partition-plan-resolution181.pdf](http://www.passia.org/palestine_facts/MAPS/pdf/1947-un-partition-plan-resolution181.pdf)>.)
9. Jewish militias began to “clear” Arab neighborhoods, including those in what is now West Jerusalem.
  - a. By the time the State of Israel was officially initiated nearly 200,000 Palestinians had already become refugees, 28,000 from Jerusalem.
  - b. Some of them had been driven out of the new Jewish sector in retaliation for their resistance to the partition, and some fled out of terror at reports of what could happen to them if they tried to stay on their property.
10. The most horrific reports came from the village of Deir Yassin (now a neighborhood in West Jerusalem).
  - a. The village was destroyed on 9 April 1947 in a massacre that included the rape of women and the murder of children.
  - b. The next day an International Red Cross team “counted over 250 dead bodies in Deir Yassin, most women and children, who had been stuffed down a well after being killed” (Wagner, *Dying in the Land of Promise*, 138).
  - c. Bertha Vester, an American missionary nurse in Jerusalem at the time described the effect of this massacre in her autobiography. “Loud speakers mounted on jeeps or armoured cars paraded the Arab sections of Western Jerusalem warning the inhabitants that if they did not leave, the Deir Yaseen treatment would be their fate. Many Muslims and Christians fled for their lives. In my Children’s Hospital, I took in fifty babies under two years old from the village of Deir Yaseen” (Quoted in Wagner, *Dying in the Land of Promise*, 141).
11. As Bishop Younan observes, “By April 30, 1948 – two weeks before the declaration of Israel’s independence and before the entry of Arab armies – all Palestinian neighborhoods in West Jerusalem had been militarily occupied, and all Arab residents had been driven out.”
  - a. One of those residents was his own mother.  
 Her family assumed, as did many Christian families, that Jerusalem was to be an international city with protection guaranteed by the world community.  
 ... “My mother describes her experience as if it happened yesterday. The Haganah drove up and down the streets with loudspeakers blaring instructions that all Arabs were to leave their houses for their own protection. The Haganah promised that it would only be a temporary leave – two weeks at most.

Quickly, my mother and her neighbors gathered up whatever belongings they could carry in a suitcase and left. Only three minutes later, as she was making her way toward the Old City, there was a loud explosion. Turning, they could see smoke rising from her very own home. It had received a direct hit by a shell. Her entire neighborhood would soon be leveled to the ground. In a matter of minutes, her whole life had changed" (Younan 23-24).

- b. With many others, she and her family fled to the old walled city of Jerusalem, where she later married another refugee and where their son Munib was born.
12. This period is known to Palestinians as the *Nakba* ("Catastrophe") because of the massive expulsions that followed, creating a large number of refugees whose situation has not yet been resolved, in spite of United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194, passed in December 1948. Paragraph 11 of that document "Resolves that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible..." (<http://cmep.org/documents/un194.htm>).
  13. Of the Christian population of Jerusalem, 37% became refugees at this time.
    - a. David Ben Gurion, leader of the Haganah militia that became the regular Israeli army, made the announcement that a new Jewish State to be called "Israel" had come into being on 14 May 1948.
    - b. No borders for this new state were specified.

### Activity 2: Small Group Activity

Step 1: In each group list as many reasons as you can that the Partition Plan and the borders it specified failed.

Step 2: In each group describe what happened to the Palestinian Christian community as a result.

Step 3: Groups share results with each other.

14. After the declaration of the State of Israel, the surrounding countries declared war.
  - a. When an Armistice Agreement was signed in 1949 to end the hostilities, West Jerusalem was left to Israel and East Jerusalem (including the Old City) was to be administered by Jordan, along with the rest of what became known as the West Bank.
  - b. One cause for sadness among Jewish people was that the Western Wall was not accessible to them during the time of Jordanian administration of the West Bank and East Jerusalem.
  - c. The Armistice Line of 1949 is now called the Green Line, and it is recognized internationally as the boundary between Israel and the Palestinian Territories.
  - d. "By the armistice agreement, the Israelis had expanded their territory from 54 percent to 77 percent of historic Palestine. ...The weakened Palestinian region, called thereafter the West Bank, was annexed by Jordan, and the Gaza Strip was administered by Egypt. Both districts were filled with the majority of the 756,000 Palestinian refugees, homeless and mostly penniless, the majority now dependencies of the United Nations (Wagner, *Dying in the Land of Promise*, 144).
15. In 1950, Israel adopted two far-reaching laws: the Law of Return and the Absentee Property Law.
  - a. The Law of Return grants "every Jew in the world (born of a Jewish mother) the right of returning to Israel and receiving citizenship and compensation."
  - b. In contrast, the Absentee Property Law allows the state "to seize property vacated by the Palestinian refugees...", to give it to the Custodian of Absentee Property. It authorizes the Custodian to sell it to the Jewish National Fund "at the value established by its Knesset [Parliament]. Only Jews are allowed to purchase the property..." (Wagner, *Dying in the Land of Promise*, 153-154).
  - c. With regard to property in West Jerusalem, the former owners, now living in East Jerusalem and elsewhere in the Occupied Palestinian Territories or in Israel, bear the official status of "present absentees."
16. In the decade that followed, tension was high in the Middle East, especially between Israel and Egypt.

"Early in the morning of June 5, 1967, Israel launched an aerial blitzkrieg, a first strike that destroyed 400 Egyptian jets on the ground and all but won the war in four hours. The Israeli army and air force, massively equipped with American military supplies, outgunned the Arab nations and in six days occupied the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights, Jerusalem, and the West Bank. The 57 percent of Palestine originally given to the Zionists had grown to 77 percent in the 1948-1949 war. Now the Israelis took military control of the other 23 percent" (Rantisi 77).

17. Upon taking control of East Jerusalem, Israel dismantled its municipal government and annexed it, applying the laws of the State of Israel to the city.
  - a. In response, the United Nations Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 242 demanding Israel's immediate withdrawal from the occupied territories.
  - b. It appealed to the principle of "the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war and the need to work for a just and lasting peace in which every State in the area can live in security," which is enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations (<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/un/un242.htm>).
  - c. When this went unheeded, it was followed up by another unanimous Security Council Resolution, #267, in 1969, making the same demand, and another in 1973 (Security Council Resolution 338).
18. Meanwhile, Israel greatly expanded the boundaries of the municipality of Jerusalem.
  - a. Twenty-eight Palestinian villages from the West Bank were now "caught" within this expanded Jerusalem Municipality.
  - b. Now, as the Israeli human rights group *B'tselem* (the Hebrew word for "in the image") points out, the conflict over Jerusalem is not solely over the site of the Temple, a place of deep holiness for Jews, but it "is being fought over places like Beit Hanina and Um Tuba – villages most Israelis have never even heard of" – much less considered holy (B'tselem 2).

### Activity 3:

Locate [http://www.passia.org/palestine\\_facts/MAPS/images/jer\\_maps/Jlem1947-2000.pdf](http://www.passia.org/palestine_facts/MAPS/images/jer_maps/Jlem1947-2000.pdf). Together, trace the changing boundaries of Jerusalem from 1947-1967.

19. "Strengthening the Jewish presence in Jerusalem" became an official policy of the Israeli government.
  - a. To this end, those creating the 1968 Master Plan for Jerusalem were instructed to do it in such a way that a ratio of approximately 74% Jewish residents to 26% Arab Palestinian residents would be maintained (Isaac and Hosh 13-15).
  - b. This ratio was based upon the results of a census taken in Jerusalem immediately following the war, while many Palestinian Jerusalemites were in Jordan, to which they had fled in fear, remembering 1948.
  - c. "People who were physically present in the area at the time of the census were granted the status of permanent residents of Israel, according to the Entry into Israel Law (sic). Jerusalem Palestinians who were not in Jerusalem during the census lost their right to reside in Jerusalem" (Guediri and Dallahseh 7).
20. There is a difference between being a Jerusalem resident and being an Israeli citizen.
  - a. Palestinian Jerusalemites are not Israeli citizens but permanent residents of Jerusalem, who carry special blue ID cards, pay taxes to the Israeli government, and are entitled to public education and health care.
  - b. They may work and travel within Israel without a permit.
  - c. However, they need a special document called a *laissez-passer* to travel abroad, with no guarantee of re-admittance.
  - d. Permanent residents may vote in local but not national elections (although most choose not to vote as they do not wish to acknowledge the validity of the Israeli system).
21. When the Knesset (Parliament of Israel) declared in 1980 that "Jerusalem, complete and united, is the capital of Israel" ([http://www.knesset.gov.il/laws/special/eng/basic10\\_eng.htm](http://www.knesset.gov.il/laws/special/eng/basic10_eng.htm)), its claim was not recognized by the international community, since the annexation of East Jerusalem was in violation of international law. The international embassies relocated to Tel Aviv.

### Activity 4: Small Group Activity

Step 1: Think about what you learned that was new to you so far in this history of Jerusalem and share it with each other.

Step 2: Individual groups share orally among themselves what they learned so far.

Step 3: Each group will share with the class their most significant findings.

## Activities

## Academic Instruction

1. In order to maintain the desired population ratio in Jerusalem, a two-pronged approach was developed: inhibiting Palestinian population growth through restrictions on construction, and increasing Jewish Israeli population growth through the building of settlements.
  - a. The long-term goal was a "Greater Jerusalem" area ringed by settlements (Abdul Hadi 4).
  - b. A settlement is a housing complex planned and subsidized by the Israeli government beyond the Green Line in occupied territory. Only Jewish Israelis are allowed to live there. Many do so for economic reasons: good housing at a subsidized price.
  - c. Settlements are illegal according to the Fourth Geneva Convention, which Israel signed. It says, "The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies" (<http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/92.htm>). (You may have heard of "illegal outposts," which are settlements unauthorized by the Israeli government; but in fact, all of the settlements are illegal by international law.)
  - d. The state of Israel contends that the Fourth Geneva Convention applies only to situations in which the military of one sovereign nation occupies the land of another sovereign nation. Because the West Bank and Gaza were never recognized as part of the state of Jordan or Egypt, Israel concludes that the Fourth Geneva Convention regarding the responsibilities of an occupying power do not apply.
  - e. Because military necessity is the initial impetus for declaring the land on which settlements are built "state land," the settlements are connected to each other and to Israel by a network of roads on which Palestinians are either forbidden to drive or on which their access is restricted. These roads are dotted with military checkpoints.
  - f. The settlements vary in size; the largest is Ma'ale Adumim just east of Jerusalem, with about 35,000 inhabitants and growing beyond the municipal borders of Jerusalem set by Israel.
  - g. In addition to the 200,000 settlers in East Jerusalem, there are now 250,000 settlers in the West Bank. These outer settlements function as a buffer, to separate Jerusalem from its wider West Bank surroundings... . Because some 40% of the Palestinian economy revolves around Jerusalem in the form of tourism, commercial life and industry, removing Jerusalem from the Palestinian realm carries such serious economic consequences as to call the very viability of the Palestinian state into question. And in general the "Greater Jerusalem" concept neutralizes Jerusalem as a major Palestinian urban, religious and cultural center (Halper, "Obstacles to Peace: A Critical Tour of the Jerusalem/West Bank Interface," 18).
  - h. The government of the United States does not recognize the settlements and has repeatedly asked Israel to stop their creation and expansion. However, the United States has done little that would pressure Israel enough to stop them.
  
2. East Jerusalem itself has been further fractured into Palestinian neighborhoods separated by a line of settlements. In an interview with the New Standard News in 2005, Uri Bank, a leader in the Moledet Party, made the situation clear:
 

"We break up Arab continuity and their claim to East Jerusalem by putting in isolated islands of Jewish presence in areas of Arab population," Bank said. "Then we definitely try to put these together to form our own continuity. It is like Legos: you put the pieces out there and connect the dots. ... Our eventual goal is Jewish continuity in all of Jerusalem."

But this blueprint does not apply only to Jerusalem, Bank explained. "Everything that goes on in East Jerusalem is a microcosm of what goes on in Judea [and] Samaria," he said, referring to the West Bank with the term preferred by Israelis who consider the territory to be part of Greater Israel.

...Moledet is a "single-issue" party, their platform calling for the "transfer" of Palestinians across the Jordan River (Elmer, [http://newstandardnews.net/content/?action=show\\_item&itemid=2227&printmode=true](http://newstandardnews.net/content/?action=show_item&itemid=2227&printmode=true) [For Moledet's website, go to: <http://www.moledet.org.il/english/> >]).

## Activity 1: Group Discussion

Step 1: Locate [http://www.passia.org/palestine\\_facts/MAPS/images/jer\\_maps/Settlements.pdf](http://www.passia.org/palestine_facts/MAPS/images/jer_maps/Settlements.pdf)

Step 2: Together, locate the “Green Line” on the map. This is the Armistice Line negotiated in 1949 beyond which Israel is understood to be holding territory illegally by international law. Locate the settlements.

Step 3: Consider what some of the reasons might be behind the Fourth Geneva Convention’s prohibition of settlements.

3. Within the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem, it is illegal for the government to confiscate private land except for “public use.”
  - a. Therefore, as Sara Kaminker, a former member of the Jewish Municipality of West Jerusalem, notes, the city “paints in green” on the map of Palestinian East Jerusalem (Quoted in Matar 164).
  - b. This means that almost 35% of Palestinian-owned land in Jerusalem has been declared open green space, not to be built upon.
  - c. However, as former Mayor of Jerusalem, Teddy Kolleck said, the land is “only green for the Palestinian population” (Quoted in Guediri and Dallasheh 12).
  - d. When plans are made to construct Jewish settlements in occupied East Jerusalem, the “green” status is changed, and the land is sold by the city to developers.
4. In order for Palestinians to build on their land, not only must it not be “green space,” but their neighborhood must have a town planning scheme.
  - a. This is nearly impossible to get.
  - b. Even if the community creates and submits a town planning scheme at its own expense, it is normal for the approval process to take twelve years.
  - c. No building may take place during this time.
  - d. About 25% of Palestinian East Jerusalem is covered by town planning schemes.
5. If the town planning scheme is approved, residents may build on their own land if it is not designated “green” and if they have a permit.
  - a. The price of the permit is very high (\$20,000 – 60,000), beyond the reach of most Palestinians, especially when the actual cost of construction is added.
  - b. If they get a permit nonetheless, they are limited in the amount of construction they can do.
  - c. “Palestinians are only allowed to build on 15 percent, 25 percent, or 50 percent of the land plot, depending on the zoning and area of construction. In contrast, Israeli Jews building in East Jerusalem settlements are allowed to build on as much as 200 percent flat space of the land. Palestinian buildings in East Jerusalem are confined to one or two stories, whereas Israeli settlements can have buildings up to eight stories” (Isaac and Hosh 192).
6. When all of these restrictions are put together, it means that there is a severe housing shortage for Palestinians in East Jerusalem.
  - a. No new Palestinian communities have been built anywhere since 1967, while in East Jerusalem alone more than 15 Jewish settlements have been built.
  - b. “Of the 97,700 housing units built in Jerusalem between 1967 and 2000, 82 percent of them were for Israeli settlements and 18 percent for Palestinians” (Guediri and Dallasheh 23).
  - c. The Palestinians of East Jerusalem are about 20,000 housing units short, unable to expand beyond the 7% of the area that is already built up (Halper, “Obstacles to Peace: A Critical Tour of the Jerusalem/West Bank Interface,” un-paginated section entitled “Jerusalem Fact Sheet”).
7. These restrictions affect all Palestinians, whether Christian or Muslim. However, since the Christian community of the occupied territories is concentrated in Jerusalem and the areas immediately surrounding it (Ramallah to the north, Bethlehem/Beit Sahour/Beit Jala to the south), the overall impact of these municipal changes on the Christian community, especially on landowners, has been devastating.
8. The options for Palestinian residents of Jerusalem are: 1. to build without a permit, or 2. to leave.
  - a. Those who build without a permit are in constant danger of having their homes demolished.
  - b. Once the permit-less house has been identified by the municipality, the owner must pay heavy fines until the house is demolished, if, in fact, it gets demolished.
  - c. The number of homes with outstanding demolition orders far exceeds the capacity of the municipal government to destroy them; therefore demolition has been described as a lottery system that one does not want to win.

9. Christian residents of Jerusalem are choosing the second option.
  - a. They are leaving. About 18.7% of Christians in Jerusalem own their houses.
  - b. The majority must rent. As the housing squeeze becomes tighter, the rents rise but the salaries do not.
  - c. This is especially true since 1993, when Jerusalem was cut off from the West Bank, its natural economic link, by a closure that is still in force today.
  - d. On top of this, in spite of the fact that they pay taxes and make up about 28% of the population, residents of East Jerusalem are allocated only about 9% of the municipal budget.
  
10. In addition, since no new schools can be built, the public school system is so overcrowded that the students must attend in shifts, morning and afternoon, and they are 1,300 classrooms short.
  - a. All who can afford it send their children to private schools, many of which are operated by the churches themselves.
  - b. Those Christians who remain firm and choose to stay under these circumstances "accept economic deprivation, substandard education, inadequate housing and social services, cultural rejection, and, in the best of circumstances, the muzzling of effective political participation.
  - c. In the worst of circumstances, they would face overt repression and violation of the most basic of their human rights" (Abu Al-Assal 161).
  
11. As Rev. Ibrahim Azar, pastor of Jerusalem's Redeemer Lutheran Church explains,
 

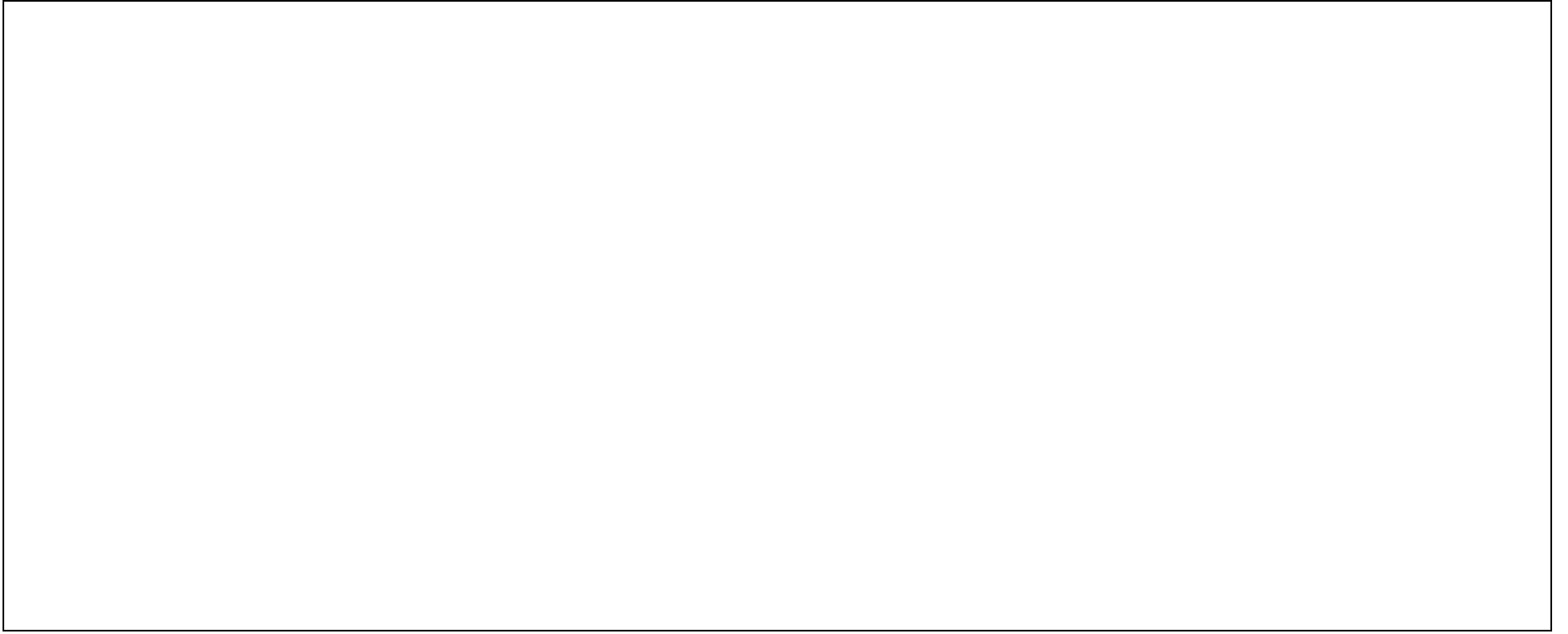
"There is a problem for Palestinians living in East Jerusalem. West Jerusalem kids have freedom and opportunities for entertainment. But East Jerusalem kids are afraid to go to West Jerusalem and they have none of the same opportunities. Kids ask, 'Why can't we have these things?' It is difficult for parents to explain. ...People are now losing hope for the future, especially of the children. Take housing, for example. Where are the kids going to live when they grow up? It's hard for the church to encourage people."
  
12. Sociologist Bernard Sabella of Bethlehem University has concentrated his work on the Palestinian Christian community.
  - a. He notes that the community's educational standards and middle-class lifestyle make it a typical migrant community when opportunities for maintaining those standards are blocked (Sabella 133-134).
  - b. Precisely for this reason, the Christian community is one of "the prime targets of an ongoing campaign of 'induced emigration.' Palestinians working or studying abroad are often not allowed to return to the country; and in general life is made so difficult that Palestinians seeking a future for their families simply up and leave. ... Since the outbreak of the second Intifada [in 2000] it has been estimated that between 150,000-250,000 Palestinians have left the Occupied Territories, including most of the Christian community from the Bethlehem and Ramallah areas" (Halper, "Obstacles to Peace: A Critical Tour of the Jerusalem/West Bank Interface," 25).
  
13. But in a survey taken in 1993, 65% of Christian respondents said that if a just peace were in place, they would not consider leaving (Sabella 134).

### **Activity 2: Small Group Discussion**

Step 1: Imagine yourself in the shoes of a Palestinian Christian living in Jerusalem under these circumstances, experiencing these events. Jot down how you would feel; what you would do, individually and as part of the Palestinian society; what kind of involvement you would seek in your church community; what kind of response you would want from the church in other countries; etc.?

Step 2: In small groups address each item on butcher paper.

Step 3: Share your findings with the class.



## Activities

## Academic Instruction

## Key Points

1. The first Intifada (“shaking off” of the occupation) began in 1987.
  - a. Images of young people throwing stones at tanks, evoking the story of David and Goliath, were common during this Intifada.
  - b. Many of the resistance tactics were purely non-violent, such as tax boycotts and public demonstrations.
  - c. Church leaders in Jerusalem encouraged the Christian community in non-violent resistance.
  - d. In 1988, the heads of the churches in Jerusalem, calling to mind Jeremiah 9:22-23, issued a statement in which they said:
 

[W]e take our stand with truth and justice against all forms of injustice and oppression. We stand with the suffering and the oppressed, we stand with the refugees and the deported, with the distressed and the victims of injustice, we stand with those who mourn and are bereaved, with the hungry and the poor. In accordance with the Word of God through the prophet Isaiah, chapter 1, verse 17: “Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow,” we call upon the faithful to pray and to labor for justice and peace for all the peoples of our area (Appendix 1 in Raheb, / *Am a Palestinian Christian*, 123).
  - e. To resist with love is a core practice of all the Palestinian Christian leaders in Jerusalem.
    - i. In addition to prayer and labor for peace, their statement recommended fasting and financial support for the poor.
    - ii. The statement was censored by Israeli authorities.

**Activity 1: Brainstorming**

Step 1: In small groups, compare and contrast the stance of the heads of churches in Jerusalem with that of Martin Luther King in the US Civil Rights Movement.

Step 2: Groups share their findings with the class as a whole.

2. The Intifada cooled during the Oslo peace process of the 1990s, although the Israeli government was expanding the settlements at a more rapid rate than ever – in spite of the fact that in 1988, the Palestinian leadership had formally and officially accepted the Green Line as the boundary of the State of Israel, thus conceding their claims to 78% of historic Palestine, and in the same year Jordan had renounced any claims to the West Bank.
  - a. The peace process ultimately failed, since no negotiated resolution could be achieved that would be recognized as “just” by international law as long as Israel was using the imbalance of power between itself and the Palestinians to push the boundaries.
  - b. Israel is the regional superpower.
 

“It is a state recognized by the international community with an economy three times larger than Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon put together, more than 40 times the size of the Palestinians’ (\$80+ billion compared to less than \$2 billion). It has a formal military alliance with the world’s largest

superpower, from which it receives more than \$3 billion in annual military assistance. It is the world's fourth largest nuclear power, possessing up to 500 nuclear warheads. It is an occupying power. The Palestinians, by contrast, have no state, no functioning economy, no army, not even the ability to move freely from village to village within their own areas" (Halper, *Obstacles to Peace: A Re-Framing of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict*, 10).

3. In 2000 Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak attempted at Camp David to reach a final status agreement that would have made "Greater Jerusalem," including all of the new settlements, part of the State of Israel, with some degree of Palestinian sovereignty over Palestinian neighborhoods and the Muslim and Christian Quarters of the Old City.
  - a. This would have created a Palestinian State of four distinct pieces: the Gaza Strip, the southern West Bank, the northern West Bank, and East Jerusalem.
  - b. Israel also attempted to reach a final status agreement on the refugees that "included no right of return... (that is, no choice for refugees and no acknowledgment by Israel of its role in creating the refugee problem)..." (Roy 25-26). Thus the Oslo process came apart.
  
4. Later that same year, Ariel Sharon, soon to be prime minister, went up to the Haram al-Sharif with hundreds of police to demonstrate Israeli control over the area.
  - a. This provocation fed into the growing frustration of many Palestinians and the Second Intifada began, otherwise known as the Al-Aqsa Intifada.
  - b. The ongoing second Intifada has been more violent than the first Intifada.
  - c. A new tactic had begun to be used by these militias for the first time as the Oslo peace process unraveled: suicide bombings.

#### **Activity 2:** Discussion

Step 1: While she was in the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme the author of this study met a young Israeli man named Elik Elhanan who had experienced the devastation of a suicide bombing. Together, listen to his story:

While Elik was serving his required three years in the military after high school, his 14-year-old sister Smadar was killed as she shopped for school supplies with a friend when two Palestinian men blew themselves up on a sidewalk. After a struggle within himself to understand why, Elik concluded that Israel needed to end its occupation and come to a just peace with the Palestinians. Violence and revenge were achieving nothing good and helping no one. He and his parents became part of a group called The Parents Circle-Families Forum. They are Israelis and Palestinians who have lost close relatives in the conflict. Everything they do as an organization they do together as Palestinians and Israelis learning how to live together and trying to encourage others on both sides to seek each other's humanity. Along with Elik we also heard from a bereaved Palestinian man named Ali Abu Awwad. You can read more about their work at <<http://www.theparentscircle.org/about.asp>>.

Elik's mother, Nurit Peled-Elhanan says, "For me, the other side, the enemy, is not the Palestinian people. For me, the struggle is not between Palestinians and Israelis, nor between Jews and Arabs. The fight is between those who seek peace and those who seek war. My people are those who seek peace. My sisters are the bereaved mothers, Israeli and Palestinian, who live in Israel and in Gaza and in the refugee camps. My brothers are the fathers who try to defend their children from the cruel occupation, and are, as I was, unsuccessful in doing so. Although we were born into a different history and speak different tongues, there is more that unites us than that which divides us " (Quoted in Younan 105).

Step 2: Identify the “two sides,” according to Nurit Peled-Elhanan.

Step 3: What do you think about Nurit Peled-Elhanan’s way of seeing the situation?

5. Palestinian Christian theologian Naim Ateek addresses the issue of suicide bombings in an essay called “Suicide Bombers: What is theologically and morally wrong with suicide bombings? A Christian Perspective.”
  - a. In it, Rev. Ateek writes,
    - i. Although some people in our Palestinian community admire the sacrifice of the suicide bombers and view it as the ultimate in the offering of oneself for the sake of the homeland and the liberation of the people, and although we understand its deeper motivation and background, we condemn it from both our position of faith as well as a legitimate method for resisting the Occupation (Ateek, “Suicide Bombers,” 142).
    - ii. He goes on to list his reasons.
      1. From his position of faith, he recognizes that this tactic emerges out of “despair and hopelessness ” (Ateek, “Suicide Bombers,” 130), so he rejects suicide bombings because he hopes in the God who gives life, both after and before death.
      2. He cannot legitimize suicide bombings as a method for resisting the Occupation “because they practice, in essence, collective punishment against people many of whom are civilians. They are guilty of the very things Palestinians detest in the Israeli government. When suicide bombers commit collective punishment, they become what they loathe. ...[It] is unjust and immoral to punish people collectively” (Ateek, “Suicide Bombers,” 146-147). Ateek appeals to international law, specifically to article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits collective penalties.
  - b. Naim Ateek’s stance is characteristic of many Palestinian Christians and Muslims.
  - c. But how can these suicide attacks be stopped?
    - i. Coming out of the Jewish community, Jeff Halper makes the following suggestion: “If the international community demands that oppressed peoples renounce terrorism as a weapon of resistance, it must provide them with alternative legitimate means of achieving their freedom and rights. Equality before the law and the universality of human rights (including their obligations) must be enforced” (Halper, *Obstacles to Peace: A Re-framing of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict*, 60).

### Activity 3: Group Discussion

Step 1: In small groups, name the reasons that people carry out suicide bombings, according to Ateek.

Step 2: Remaining in small groups, consider the alternatives that Halper proposes.

Step 3: Share each group’s work with the class as a whole.

6. The Israeli military retaliation against the Intifada came down hard.
  - a. The heads of churches in Jerusalem delivered another unanimous statement calling for an end of violence by all parties, but it did not end. In the Jerusalem area the Christian communities most affected were Beit Jala and Bethlehem, particularly in the years 2001 and 2002.

- b. They experienced heavy bombing, 40 consecutive days of curfew, and military incursions that left behind loss of life, traumatized children, and extensive damage to property, including church property.
  - c. Most widely known was the siege of the Church of the Nativity.
  - d. Less well-known was the takeover of the nearly-completed Dar Annadwa, the International Center of Bethlehem, attached to Christmas Lutheran Church.
  - e. Its story is told by Rev. Mitri Raheb in his book *Bethlehem Beseiged*.
  - f. Visiting a few weeks after the curfew was lifted, the author of this study saw the results with her own eyes.
    - i. All the windows had been broken; volunteers were picking glass shards out of the window frames.
    - ii. There was graffiti in Hebrew all over the walls, which were also pocked with bullet holes.
    - iii. The furniture had been flung all over and broken.
    - iv. Even some of the ceramic pieces in the art workshop had been shot, including one labeled "Peace."
    - v. One of the artists had collected some of the hundreds of spent bullet casings and embedded them in a ceramic plaque depicting Jerusalem.
7. North of Jerusalem, Ramallah, too, was attacked.
- a. Although Palestinians consider East Jerusalem the future capital of a Palestinian State, the current Palestinian Authority, which came into being during the Oslo process, is located in Ramallah.
  - b. The attack on Ramallah severely weakened the new government's ability to govern.
  - c. "In Ramallah virtually the entire civil infrastructure was destroyed – all the data of the government ministries, hospitals and clinics, the land registry office, the courts and banking system, businesses, non-governmental organizations and research institutes, even the Palestinian Academy of Sciences" (Halper, "Obstacles to Peace: A Critical Tour of the Jerusalem/West Bank Interface," 18).
8. During the Second Intifada, restrictions on the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem have increased.
- a. There have been sporadic curfews in the West Bank (when no one is allowed out of the house); checkpoints through which anyone wishing to enter Jerusalem must pass (for which they need a magnetic card indicating security clearance in order to get a permit that allows travel for specific purposes on specific days); and sometimes total closures (during which no one may pass).
  - b. In East Jerusalem, the large concrete wall built within Palestinian neighborhoods hampers mobility as these residents, too, must now travel to the nearest checkpoint at the wall and show the soldiers the appropriate ID card (a Jerusalem resident ID, not a West Bank ID).
9. All this means that it is sometimes not possible for people to reach Jerusalem, not even for religious festivals.
- a. For example, take the events that happened in Jerusalem during the month of Ramadan in 2005, for which the author of this study was present as a witness.
  - b. As is normal for all Muslims, Muslim Palestinians fasted during the daylight hours and ate a big meal after sunset.
  - c. For the regular Friday prayer, many people (including pilgrims from abroad) traveled to the al-Aqsa Mosque, a special privilege and obligation during Ramadan, which is the month in which the Qur'an was revealed.
  - d. At night the streets were decorated with lights and children set off firecrackers.
  - e. Meanwhile, many Christian Zionists from all over the world were also visiting in order to celebrate the Jewish festival of Sukkoth (the Feast of Tabernacles), which

happened to coincide with Ramadan in 2005.

- f. One morning two large stones appeared in the Old City, marked with a message that they were the foundation stones for a third Temple to be built on the Haram al-Sharif.
- g. They were not laid, but the next morning she went to see what would happen.
- h. The Muslim Quarter of the Old City, patrolled by Israeli soldiers, was closed to Muslims while hundreds of foreign Christian Zionists were going up to the Haram al-Sharif to look at the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa Mosque, places that they would like to see destroyed.
- i. Writing in 2002, Dr. Mustafa Abu Sway, himself a Jerusalemite living very close to Al-Aqsa, records his experiences at the mosque in that year.

“Even Jerusalemite Muslims do not have access to the Al-Aqsa Mosque all the time. ...You have to be male and young in order for you to be denied the basic right of freedom of worship. I happen to be "young", for I have attempted to pray many Friday prayers last year and I was denied entry to the mosque because I was younger than 45 years of age! I am 43 and I need another two years in order to qualify to pray according to "Israeli" standards. I had to join a large crowd of "youngsters" like myself and we prayed at the bottom of the street that leads to Lions' Gate. There was another congregation praying outside Damascus Gate” (Abu Sway 18).

#### **Activity 5: Open Class Discussion**

Step 1: Consider whether the freedom to worship is important.

Step 2: Together, use empathy and imagination to answer the following questions:

1. Given what you know about the religious significance of Jerusalem for Jews, Christians, and Muslims, what might Jews hope for in terms of freedom to worship in Jerusalem? What specifically might be important for Jews?
2. What might Christians hope for in terms of freedom to worship in Jerusalem? What specifically might be important for Christians?
3. What might Muslims hope for in terms of freedom to worship in Jerusalem? What specifically might be important for Muslims?

## Activities

## Academic Instruction

## Key Points

1. In 2002 construction of the barrier alternating between fence and wall began.
  - a. In urban areas, like Jerusalem, the separation barrier is a 25-foot high concrete wall.
  - b. In rural areas, it is a fence that appropriates and flattens land across a 60-70 yard stretch.

## Activity 1:

Step 1: To see what the separation barrier looks like both as a wall and as a fence, you can download the brief Powerpoint presentation at:

[http://www.ochaopt.org/?module=displaysection&section\\_id=125&static=0&format=html](http://www.ochaopt.org/?module=displaysection&section_id=125&static=0&format=html). Click on "October 2006: Barrier and Access."

Step 2: The Foundation for Middle East Peace has an updated map of the barrier at [http://www.fmep.org/maps/map\\_data/West\\_Bank\\_Separation\\_Barrier\\_2007.html](http://www.fmep.org/maps/map_data/West_Bank_Separation_Barrier_2007.html).

Step 3: The Israeli human rights group B'tselem (which is Hebrew for "in the image" of God) shows a closer look at the wall around Jerusalem at:

[http://www.btselem.org/Download/Jerusalem\\_Separation\\_Barrier\\_Eng.PDF](http://www.btselem.org/Download/Jerusalem_Separation_Barrier_Eng.PDF). As points of reference, locate the Green Line in green and the Jerusalem Municipality Boundary in yellow.

Step 4: Share your observations with each other.

2. Construction of the barrier is nearly completed around Jerusalem, incorporating the large surrounding settlements into the city.
  - a. The only major piece yet to be built is the extension around the Ma'ale Adumim settlement.
  - b. Once that is completed, the West Bank will be divided in half, north and south.
3. The entire barrier is being built on the Palestinian side of the Green Line, and when it is finished "only 6% of the wall will be within 100 meters of the Green Line" (Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs 15).
  - a. The area between the Green Line and the wall around Jerusalem is known as the "Jerusalem Envelope."
  - b. Palestinian towns folded into this envelope are caught in confusion.
4. One such town is Ar Ram, where the wall runs down the middle of the main road, along a north/south axis.
  - a. Straddling the expanded Jerusalem municipal borders, Ar-Ram was one of the suburbs to which many East Jerusalem Palestinian Christian families moved when they could no longer afford living in East Jerusalem.

- b. This border was relatively porous in the past.
  - c. People with both Jerusalem IDs and West Bank IDs live in Ar-Ram.
  - d. But now those with West Bank IDs must move to the eastern side of the wall and those with Jerusalem IDs must move to the western side of the wall to retain their Jerusalem residency.
  - e. Families in which the spouses carry different IDs may not live together.
5. Another border town is Al 'Eizariya (biblical Bethany, where Martha, Mary, and Lazarus lived); it is a town of 16,395 people, 25% with Jerusalem IDs and 75% with West Bank IDs.

**Activity 2:**

Step 1: Typical is the story of Rimaz, the wife of Ghassan, the organist at the Palestinian congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Jerusalem. To learn their story, watch the 10-minute video "Forbidden Family," downloadable from the ELCA's website: <http://www.elca.org/peacenotwalls/resources>

Step 2: Discuss the following questions: In the video, Bishop Younan suggests building bridges, not walls. What are the tools needed for bridge-building in this situation? What would make both Israelis and Palestinians feel safe?

6. As of 2003, the amount of Palestinian-owned land confiscated for the construction of the barrier was 670 acres.
- a. Since the barrier is built so as to include as much land and as few people as possible, it hugs Palestinians population centers, leaving them beyond the wall in the West Bank while incorporating their fields into the area on the Jerusalem side of the barrier.
  - b. In this way, 4,800 acres of land have been made inaccessible to its owners.
7. For these reasons, the UN General Assembly requested the International Court of Justice in The Hague to examine the issue and to give an advisory ruling on the legality of the barrier. In July 2004, the court ruled that the barrier was illegal.
- a. As an occupying power, Israel has legal responsibilities to those living under its occupation east of the Green Line.
  - b. It is required to respect their property, freedom of movement, work, education, health care, and right to self-determination. Since these are all being violated by the barrier, the court ruled that Israel must remove the barrier.
8. Israel does not accept the ruling of the court.
- a. Its own High Court examined the issue of the barrier and recommended changes in its route to lessen the harmful impact on the Palestinian population.
  - b. However, regarding East Jerusalem, the High Court of Israel maintained the legality of Israel's 1967 annexation and allowed political factors to be considered in the routing of the wall. These political considerations include demographics.
  - c. As Haim Ramon, Israeli Minister for Jerusalem, said, one of the goals of the barrier was to make Jerusalem a more Jewish city by including the settlements and land for their expansion ([http://www.aljazeera.com/me.asp?service\\_ID=9208](http://www.aljazeera.com/me.asp?service_ID=9208)). In April of 2004, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon received assurances from U.S. President George Bush that in any final resolution the settlements would have to be taken into account and that Israel would not have to withdraw to the Green Line.

9. In its October 2005 update, the United States' Overseas Security Advisory Council issued a warning against this turn of events.
  - a. The OSAC analysis says, "Jerusalem – holy to Jews, Muslims and Christians – is the physical and emotional core of the Middle East conflict. The future of Israeli-Palestinian relations will be decided on this highly sensitive issue and the way things are going, all efforts at a peace settlement could founder on this" (Department of State of the United States of America, Overseas Security Advisory Council [OSAC] email update as of 19 October 2005).
  - b. A 2005 study by the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies reaches the same conclusion. "According to the report, while the wall may be contributing to security, overall 'it has a negative impact on life in the city and its surrounding area' and in the long run it may increase hostility and terrorism" (<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/objects/pages/PrintArticleEn.jhtml?itemNo=632264>).

## Activities

## Academic Instruction

## Key Points

1. As the conflict has continued over the decades, it has come more and more to be framed in religious categories, aided by the Christian Zionists looking for a fulfillment of biblical prophecy as they understand it.
  - a. The group that is perhaps the best known is the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem (ICEJ).
    - i. This organization was founded in 1980 in response to the removal of international embassies from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv.
    - ii. The ICEJ sponsors occasional International Christian Zionist Congresses.
    - iii. Delegates to the first such congress in 1985 resolved, among other things, that “All Nations Should Recognize Judea and Samaria as belonging to Israel,” insisting that these regions are “inaccurately termed ‘the West Bank’ ” because they are part of Israel “by Biblical right” (Appendix in The Middle East Council of Churches 17-18).
    - iv. They also called upon Arab States to absorb the Palestinian population.
    - v. In an interview, the director of the Christian Embassy once told Evangelical New Testament scholar, Gary Burge, “ ‘Christians will be judged by how they treat Israel’ ” (Burge 243).
    - vi. The Embassy engages in a number of projects which appear to have close collaboration with Israeli political leadership. “Among these are: lobbying (particularly in the United States), promotion of Israeli products, sale of Israeli bonds, annual rallies such as the Feast of Tabernacles, ...blood donations for the Israeli Defense Forces, writing in the secular press to defend Israeli political positions, promoting Christian Zionism in the West” (Middle East Council of Churches 11).
    - vii. For this, the ICEJ has a budget of roughly \$1 million annually (Anderson 97).
  - b. “Christian Zionists figure prominently in assuring that Israel receives monetary aid, both officially and unofficially. Israel has long since been the recipient of the largest package of foreign aid available from the United States. The annual aid to Israel averages upwards of \$6 billion, not including loan guarantees, annual compound interest, or tax-exempt donations. ...[I]n a given year, the total aid package to Israel is some \$10 billion, meaning that the “U.S. government has given more federal aid to the average Israeli citizen in a given year than it has give[n] to the average American citizen. ...Christian Zionists also raise a tremendous amount of money unofficially through churches, Christian organizations, and televangelism. One such group is the Christian Friends of Israeli Communities, which operates an ‘adopt-a-settlement program’. This program has linked more than 40 churches in the United States to particular settlements in the West Bank, the goal being to garner enough Christian support to prevent the United States government from pressuring Israel to withdraw from the West Bank...” (Anderson 94-96).
  - c. In 2006, Rev. John Hagee of Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, Texas, organized a new Christian Zionist lobby known as “Christians United for Israel.”
    - i. Its goal is to encourage American Christians and lawmakers to support the expansion of the State of Israel morally and monetarily on the principle that, since God has given the land to the Jewish people, they should seize it (<[http://www.cufi.org/site/PageServer?pagename=learn\\_teachings](http://www.cufi.org/site/PageServer?pagename=learn_teachings)>).

- ii. To learn more about CUFI and Christian Zionism, visit the website “Challenging Christian Zionism,” where you can find links to several videos from Bill Moyers’ public television program, “The Journal,” which feature interviews and documentary footage of CUFI events: <http://www.christianzionism.org/>).
2. Although local Palestinian Christians do not share this theology or these political aims, there is growing suspicion of Christian Palestinians among Muslim Palestinians.
    - a. As early as 1988, the heads of the churches in Jerusalem felt it necessary to issue a statement that the ICEJ did not represent the local Christian community.
    - b. Opposition has begun to develop in the form of Muslim political parties seeking to establish Islamic law instead.
    - c. One symptom of this trend is reflected in the changes to the draft Constitution of the Palestinian Authority.
    - d. In 1988, the draft included no reference to religion except to say that religious co-existence was to be the norm.
    - e. In 2004, the draft retained explicit assurances of respect for all monotheistic religions, but made Islam the official religion (Smith 342-343).
  3. Threats to the Haram al-Sharif have intensified Muslim suspicions.
    - a. For example, in 1969, an Australian Christian seeking to destroy the al-Aqsa Mosque to make way for the Messiah’s return, set fire to it, causing much damage, including the destruction of the pulpit donated by Salah al-Din.
    - b. There have been repeated attempts by Jewish and foreign Christian groups to destroy al-Aqsa so that a third temple can be built, and many Muslims have been killed on the premises.
    - c. Meanwhile, digging for traces of the ancient Jewish Temple has been taking place near the mosque, raising general Palestinian opposition and Muslim opposition in particular.
    - d. The resistance to this work has two reasons: First, layers of remains from post-biblical times have been considered worthless and destroyed in the effort to reach the Bronze and Iron Ages of Jewish Antiquity (Al-Jubeih 178).
    - e. In addition, there is fear that the excavation will weaken the foundations of the sacred space above (Department of State of the United States of America, Overseas Security Advisory Council email update as of 19 October 2005).

Activity 1: Discuss the following with each other:

1. Is the conflict over Jerusalem religious or political? Is it both? Is it something else?
2. Go back to your original image of Jerusalem from Unit 1. Has it changed?

## Activities

## Academic Instruction

## Part 1: Key Points

1. When the author went to visit St. Mark's Syriac Orthodox Church in Jerusalem, she was treated to a tour by Justina, the caretaker.
  - a. At points in her narrative, Justina would interrupt herself to say, "We have a good God!"
  - b. The more the author learned of the situation in Jerusalem, the more she was amazed at this level of trust in the goodness of God.
  - c. A Muslim friend in the EAPPI program once expressed to the author her disgust at all this fighting over nothing but stones, and she wanted to know where God is in all of this.

**Activity 1:** For discussion: How would each of you answer this Muslim friend?

2. The stones here have been built up over the places of spiritual significance as witnesses to what happened there.
  - a. As Jesus said, if his disciples were silenced, "the stones would shout out" (Luke 19:40).
  - b. Yet the witness of the stones of these places could be misinterpreted without the voices of the "living stones" of the church.
  - c. Local Christians love 1 Peter 2:4-5, "Come to [Christ], a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."
  - d. As evangelist Hani Odeh from the Lutheran Church in Beit Sahour said in an interview, "The church is not buildings, but people. The people make the church holy, not the stones. A place will be holy wherever Christians are. Can you imagine the holy land of Jesus' birth without Christian believers? I cannot imagine it."
3. "Like Judaism and Islam, Christianity...is not a European religion. Its homeland is in the Middle East, and continuity with its past is dependent on the Christians who continue to live in that land in which the faith is native. Were the holy places turned into museums or archaeological curiosities, as they have been in Turkey and Tunisia, the tangible links that stretch back through history to the apostles and to God's revelation in Christ would be severed. Without the presence of living Christian communities, the witness of the Holy Land can only be equivocal. The martyrs and teachers, the monks and bishops, the faithful who lived in Bethlehem and Beit Jala and Nazareth and Jerusalem would no longer be signs of a living faith, but forgotten names from a distant past. Bethlehem would become a shrine, and Christian Jerusalem a city of ancient renown. Only people, not stones and earth and marble, can bear an authentic witness (Wilker 254).
  - a. What will become of their faithful witness in the land if there is no longer a living Christian community here?
  - b. Rev. Mitri Raheb says, "The local Christians are a sign of the continuity of witness to Jesus Christ through all these centuries. It would be a shame for Christianity if it disappears from its place of origin" (Raheb interview).

**Activity 2:** For discussion: When the pastors of the ELCJHL were interviewed and asked about the significance of Jerusalem, one image kept coming up: "It is the heart," they

said. Hani Odeh drew a picture of a circle with rays coming and going from it, just as the heart keeps the body alive by gathering blood in and pumping it out. In what way do you consider Jerusalem important for Christian faith? Is it necessary that there be a native church thriving in Jerusalem?

4. For Palestinian Christians, Jerusalem has a dual significance: religious and civil.
  - a. The Latin [Catholic] Patriarch of Jerusalem, Michel Sabbah, himself a Palestinian, says, “[A]s local Christians, we are aware that Jerusalem belongs to us for two reasons, religious and civil, while all other Christians of the world have concerns in Jerusalem on religious grounds only” (Sabbah xxvi).
  - b. In 1994, the twelve heads of the churches in Jerusalem issued a memorandum on the significance of the city for Christians. There they wrote, “The significance of Jerusalem for Christians...has two inseparable fundamental dimensions: 1 – a Holy City with Holy Places most precious to Christians because of their link with the history of salvation fulfilled in and through Jesus Christ; 2 – a city with a community of Christians which has been living continually there since its origins. Thus for the local Christians, as well as for local Jews and Muslims, Jerusalem is not only a Holy City, but also their native city where they live, whence their rights to continue to live there freely, with all the rights which obtain from that.” (“The Significance of Jerusalem for Christians,” 237-239).
5. As witnesses, the living stones of the Palestinian church do not only testify to what God has done in Christ, they also testify to what they see happening around them.
  - a. By definition, a witness is someone who sees something and tells about it, especially when it is in dispute, as in a court of law.
  - b. Palestinian Christians are called to witness both to the justice of God’s law and to the breaching of that law in injustice.
5. If one begins, as Jews, Christians and Muslims all do, from “an assertion of the sovereignty of God as the ultimate ruler of the universe, and with the teaching that God [is] Lord over the kingdoms of humankind,” then all governmental power is subject to the law of God and cannot be exercised arbitrarily without condemnation from God (Kuttab 93).
  - a. When the ancient people of Judah had returned from exile, the new Persian government required of them an account of how they would exercise the limited autonomy granted to them.
  - b. What divine principles were going to rule them? The Torah was written to answer this question that touched on the people’s character and identity (Bechman).
  - c. It begins with Genesis, a story of creation. “A theology of creation can be very important to us in the Middle East, where several religions, as well as nations, co-exist. Such a theology holds that all human beings, no matter what their religion or nationality, are created in the image of God. To protect a human being’s rights is therefore a divine law” (Raheb, *I Am a Palestinian Christian*, 44).
6. The idea that human rights are given by God when God creates human beings is a strong theme running through Palestinian theology.
  - a. As Palestinian Melkite priest Elias Chacour says, “I was not born a Christian. I was born a baby. We all are born babies with the same identity, in the image and with the likeness of God” (Chacour 13).
  - b. Everything we are and have, including our neighbor, is a gift from God.
  - c. Thus we are obliged to God. It matters to God what we do with these gifts.
  - d. The Law is God’s recognition that the world God creates and loves is in the care of sinners, which drives God to put in place protective boundaries to limit human behavior.
  - e. This Godly Law channels action toward the preservation of life and goodness and away from what is harmful.

- f. This Law is often summarized by the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17 and Deuteronomy 5:6-21) or by Jesus' words: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:37-40; see also Mark 12:28-34).
  - g. There are variations on this in every religion and culture.
  - h. The Law is God's call to us to care for what God has made; it is our human vocation.
  - i. Here a triangular relationship is at work between God, you, and your neighbor.
7. In October 2007, Muslim leaders from all over the world sent an open letter to Christian leaders all over the world, inviting a conversation between Christians and Muslims over their common commandments to love God and neighbor (<http://www.acommonword.com>). The invitation has been eagerly received by many Christian leaders, who encourage Christian communities to open such dialogues with Muslims and Jews locally ([http://www.elca.org/ScriptLib/CO/ELCA\\_News/encArticleList.asp?article=3749](http://www.elca.org/ScriptLib/CO/ELCA_News/encArticleList.asp?article=3749)).
8. However, since the social structures of our world, including our laws, are shaped by sinful humans, they can be corrupt and unjust.
- a. They must always be evaluated to ensure that they are oriented toward God's overarching principles.
  - b. Criticism and disobedience are sometimes necessary.
  - c. When the Hebrew prophets tested the actions of their kings, they sometimes found them wanting.
  - d. At a conference in Bethlehem in November 2005, George Tinker of the Osage nation gave a warning from his own people's experience: The "rule of law" is not always rooted in justice. Laws must be deconstructed when they are unjust.

**Activity 3:**

Step 1: Divide into small groups. Each group should be provided with a large paper and markers. Create three columns on the piece of paper.

Step 2: In small groups, discuss what it might mean for residents of Jerusalem to love God and neighbor. Summarize your thoughts in the first column of the paper.

Step 3: In small groups, discuss what it might mean for those present and participating in the study to love God and their neighbors across the world in Jerusalem. Summarize your thoughts in the second column of the paper.

Step 4: In small groups, discuss whether we are in fact loving God and neighbor in this situation as God's Law commands. Summarize your thoughts in the third column of the paper.

Step 5: Each group shares its thoughts with the others.

## Activities

## Academic Instruction

## Part 1: Key Points

1. Doing our best to live according to the Law and doing our best to ensure that the laws are just does not, however, make us right in God's eyes.
  - a. The Law exists because we are sinners; if we were not sinners, we would not need the Law.
  - b. Therefore, its very presence convicts us in front of God even as it protects us from ourselves and each other.
  - c. Since we are always sinners, even as Christians, we always need the Law.
  
2. This means that "[n]o one is entitled to violate God's law, putting themselves in God's place" (Altmann 5).
  - a. Injustice must not be perpetrated in the name of God.
  - b. When we oppress others in the name of God, theological distortions are created.
  - c. This is why the Qur'an cannot be used in support of terrorism, "a form of warfare in which innocent people are specifically targeted in order to instill fear in a society. ...The Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) forbade the killing of non-combatants" (Seda, "Islam Is..." 20). An injustice to humans and to God is done when Palestinians kill unarmed Israelis.
  - d. Mitri Raheb notes another theological distortion when he lifts up the covenant that God made with Abraham and his descendents regarding the land. "It is interesting to note that most of the promises of land in the Bible stem from the time of the patriarchs or from the time of the exile...and thus from a time when Israel actually had no land of its own. As a matter of fact, these promises were meant to be promises and words of hope to a people who were weak and stateless. ...But in situations when Israel had control over a state, a territory, and an army, God's word came instead to admonish Israel to do justice. As far as God was concerned, land without justice was out of the question" (Raheb, *I Am a Palestinian Christian*, 76).
  
3. For Palestinians, expulsion from the land in the name of God has thrown them into a struggle with the Bible itself and, furthermore, with God.
  - a. Naim Ateek, a Palestinian Anglican theologian writes: "With the exception of relatively few people within the Christian communities in the Middle East, the existence of God is not in doubt. What has been seriously questioned is the nature and character of God. What is God really like? What is God's relation to the new State of Israel? Is God partial only to the Jews? Is this a God of justice and peace? ...The focus of these questions is the very person of God. God's character is at stake. God's integrity has been questioned" (Ateek, *Justice and Only Justice*, 78).
  - b. Palestinian Christian Munir Fasheh expresses the anguish that such questions create in his own life's story: "I was born in Jerusalem in 1941 and was expelled along with my family from our home in 1948. Since then, our home has been inhabited by European Jews, whom I was told were 'chosen' by God to live in it, play with my toys, even eat the food we left. ...Many of the absurdities and hypocrisies I have had to live with are connected with God. It was very difficult for me as a

child to reconcile two Gods in my mind; one in whose name I was expelled from my home, and the other who was revealed in the beatitudes, who is the God of the scapegoats, the persecuted, the dehumanized and the poor. Not only have I never been able to reconcile the two but, over the years, I have watched the God of the deprived and scapegoats slowly retreating and being defeated, especially within official circles, religious institutions, official media, the clergy, scholars and leaders” (Fasheh 168-169).

**Activity 1:** Discuss together your responses to the questions about God that Naim Ateek and Munir Fasheh are raising.

4. For many Christian Zionists it is clear that Munir Fasheh had to be displaced in order for the events described by the prophets to be fulfilled.
  - a. In their eyes the time for human justice is over.
  - b. It is now time for God to come with destructive power.
  - c. So televangelist Jim Robinson can say, “There will be no peace until Jesus comes. Any preaching of peace prior to his return is heresy. It is against the word of God. It is anti-Christ’ ” (Quoted in Chapman 122).
  
5. As outrageous as such a statement seems, perhaps there is a sense in which it is true, not in historical terms but in theological terms.
  - a. When the world is teeming with injustice and the offspring of injustice, despair among the powerless and impunity among the powerful, there can indeed be no peace.
  - b. Here there can only be hopeless death and the judgment of God.
  - c. From these depths comes the voice of the psalmist crying to God in Psalm 88:7 and 16, “Your wrath lies heavy upon me, and you overwhelm me with all your waves. ...Your wrath has swept over me; your dread assaults destroy me.”
  - d. Reflecting on Martin Luther’s understanding of these verses, Robert Bertram wrote,

“For that is the way it is with the law. ‘All it does is to increase sin, accuse, frighten, threaten with death, and disclose God as a wrathful Judge who damns sinners.’ And ‘where terror and a sense of sin, death, and the wrath of God are present, there is certainly no righteousness, nothing heavenly, and no God. ...Witness that cry of misery on the cross, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” ...A man who feels these things in earnest really becomes sin, death, and the curse itself’ ” (<http://www.crossings.org/archive/bob/HowOurSinwereChrist.pdf>).
  - e. Notice the way that the experiences of both victim and perpetrator are woven into the words of the Psalmist, and then notice that at the end of Luther’s explanation, “Jesus comes” to absorb and express all that human experience of vain misery and guilty condemnation in a cry from the cross.
  - f. This is very biblical, as New Testament scholar Peter Walker points out: “[A]lthough they were faced with the very same Old Testament passages as we are today, the New Testament writers did not reach a ‘Zionist’ conclusion. Instead they reached a distinctively Christian conclusion which affirmed the faithfulness of God to his ancient promises and saw these as now fulfilled, even if in an unexpected way, in the coming of Jesus” (Walker 68).
  
6. Mitri Raheb explains, “The Bible, the book of the persecuted, has the crucified Lord as its centerpiece. Only from this center...can the Bible be understood and interpreted correctly” (Raheb, *I Am a Palestinian Christian*, 63).
  - a. If we look at this “crucified Lord,” we see that in Jesus’ time, his own beloved Jewish people were living under both external oppression and internal corruption.
  - b. It was not an accident that Jesus was killed in Jerusalem and not somewhere else.

- c. “Jesus was claiming to be, in effect, the new or true Temple, and...his death is to be seen as the drawing together into one of the history of Israel in her desolation, dying her death outside the walls of the city, and rising again as the beginning of the real ‘restoration’, the real return from exile...” (Tom Wright 74).
- d. Therefore, those who are confused, guilty, or in despair can take Luther’s advice and wrap Christ up “in our sins, our curse, our death, and everything evil. ...The Prince of life, who died, is alive and reigns. ...Therefore Christ, who is the divine Power, Righteousness, Blessing, Grace, and Life, conquers and destroys these monsters - sin, death, and the curse - without weapons or battle, in His own body and in Himself... .This circumstance, ‘in Himself,’ makes the duel more amazing and outstanding; for it shows that such great things were to be achieved in the one and only Person of Christ - namely, that the curse, sin, and death were to be destroyed, and that the blessing, righteousness, and life were to replace them - and that through Him the whole creation was to be renewed. ...To the extent that Christ rules by His grace in the hearts of the faithful, there is no sin or death or curse. ...This is the chief doctrine of the Christian faith” (Luther 278-282).
- e. This is the advice Martin Luther gave for all who, like Munir Fasheh, are being condemned with the Bible: “[I]f the adversaries press the Scriptures against Christ, we urge Christ against the Scriptures” (Quoted in Altmann 52).
- f. As Chris Wright explains, Jesus was understood by the gospel writers to *be* the fulfillment of prophecy.
  - i. Jesus never points beyond himself to some future fulfillment (Chris Wright 13-15).
  - ii. God’s reign is not waiting for global warfare to end the world but has already begun among those who live in Jesus.
- g. Christian Zionism’s “shift away from the Christocentric faith” worries the Middle East Council of Churches.
  - i. “Jesus is de-emphasized, as is His death and Resurrection, while salvation and judgment are redefined” (Middle East Council of Churches, Preface).
  - ii. Bishop Younan writes of Christian Zionists: “They seek Christ the military general, not the Christ of the Cross. ...My Christ is always the Christ of the Cross that comes to save the world freely with his precious blood...” (<http://www.elcjh.org/resources/lectures/04OctJerusalem.htm>).
  - iii. The Christian Zionist program...[presents] a world view where the gospel is identified with the ideology of success and militarism. ...[It] is, therefore a dangerous reduction of the Christian faith and one that would advance the political cause of a state or particular people at the expense of other people within God’s creation, even the living church (Middle East Council of Churches 13).
- h. The center of Christian faith is Christ, not the State of Israel. It is not one’s support for the State of Israel’s policies that gains salvation, but it is faith in Christ and what he has done for the world.

**Activity 2: Form small groups.**

Step 1: Summarize in your own words the Gospel message about Jesus.

Step 2: Reflect on how Jesus comes.

Step 3: How does Jesus’ coming bring peace?

Step 4: Each group shares its work with the others.

- 7. In Christ, both the powerful and the powerless are transformed and receive the power of the Holy Spirit, which is the “power of love over death, and hope over despair” (Wagner, *Anxious for Armageddon*, 186).
  - a. It is the same Spirit, “the Lord and giver of life,” who hovered over the chaos at the beginning to create the whole earth.
  - b. Now the Holy Spirit creates new people as “God has reconciled Himself with the human being in Jesus Christ Incarnate. ...Could this reconciliation...serve in our day as a basis for reconciliation and peace between Jews and Arabs in the Holy Land?”(Middle East Council of Churches, Preface). Could the reconciliation between God and humanity lead to reconciliation among humans?

- c. As Gabriel Habib of the Middle East Council of Churches says, “[I]t is in the collective historical memory of the Middle East that Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem not far from most of us and not by accident. He came, he entered our history because that region was characterized by conflicts, war, divisions, hatred, and destruction. He came in order to give us, through the reconciling process of the incarnation, the seed for transforming hatred into love, division into reconciliation, and war into peace. So in their collective memory, Christians think and feel that they are peacemakers, agents of peace” (Quoted in Wagner, *Anxious for Armageddon* 186).
8. The Incarnation (“coming in the flesh”) of God in the person of Jesus gives “significance to all human life. That is why racism, fascism, and religious fanaticism are alien to every true religion. Since the Incarnation one can no longer use religion against human beings or pit God against human beings. It must obviously also be impossible since the Incarnation to wound, discriminate against, or even make war against human beings in the name of God. If a human being is wounded, then God is wounded also. If a human being is honored, God is too” (Raheb, *I Am a Palestinian Christian*, 44).
9. In the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, the site both of Jesus’ cross and of his tomb, a small stone pillar was placed and named the *omphalos*, Greek for “navel” because in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus a new creation has been born. Bishop Munib Younan writes, “For Palestinian Christians, Jerusalem represents the navel of the world, symbolically located near the Holy Tomb in the Holy Sepulchre Church. Whenever we visit there, we make a point of touching this spot as a constant reminder of our place in the world. Our whole existence revolves around the belief in the crucifixion and the resurrection. It nurtures our faith that the hope of resurrection will overcome all suffering from injustice and oppression. The resurrection creates in us new life, revives love, promotes peace, and calls for reconciliation to live together in the land. It provides us the only lasting security, which frees us up to be witnesses, engaged fully in a pluralistic society” (Yunan, *Witnessing for Peace*, 64).
10. So as not to leave Jesus behind, Munir Fasheh exercises his faith “to make sure that the God of the persecuted and the dehumanized is not defeated in our minds, hearts, actions and relationships with one another” (Fasheh 169).
11. With Jesus in mind, Nora Carmi says, “I think it is only my faith and my total belief that there is always a resurrection after the crucifixion that sustains me, and nothing else at the moment. We keep hoping, and the hope is that God will act in the right moment, that injustice cannot go on and that no power is greater than the power of God” (“Walking the Path Jesus Walked”).
12. By their baptisms into the name of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Christians share the very breath of Jesus, and begin to be conformed to his life.
- a. Their question then becomes *not* “How can I use my God/religion/Bible to get the result I want?” but as Lutheran pastor Ibrahim Azar asks, “How will I live here? How can I live without losing my belief? How can I make the best of this situation?” (Azar interview).
- b. For Nora Carmi, this means being conformed more and more to Jesus not only individually but as a Christian community. “What can we learn from Christ in our resistance? How can we resist with dignity, respect, non-violently but yet have the courage to speak out because we cannot remain silent when there is injustice?” (“Walking the Path Jesus Walked”).

**Activity3:**

Step 1: Take a look at Matthew 5:38-40. Talk with each other about what you think Jesus means in these verses.

Step 2: As he thinks about these verses, Rev. Mitri Raheb illustrates what they could mean in his context with the following story. Listen as a volunteer reads this story out loud.

In 1989, during the first Intifada, the town of Beit Sahour (traditionally considered the shepherds' field of Luke 2, just next to Bethlehem) decided to refuse paying taxes to Israel as an act of nonviolent resistance. "The citizens of Beit Sahour justified their tax boycott with two slogans, 'No taxation under occupation' and 'No taxation without representation'." The result was the imposition by the Israeli army of a total closure and curfew on the town for almost 40 days, the confiscation of household goods totaling more than \$1,800,000, and the imprisonment of protesters. "One day during this time, the tax collectors, supported by the Israeli military, pushed their way into one of the houses in Beit Sahour. They started to move everything out, loading the family's possessions onto a large truck. The family stood and watched... . After a few hours, the living room was totally empty. The soldiers, after having robbed her of all her possessions, turned to bid farewell to the elderly owner, a Christian. The old woman looked at the young soldier sadly. ...Her lips moved, but not to curse, not to cry out, not even to scold. 'You forgot the curtains. ...' An eerie silence descended on the room. Shamed and guilty, the soldiers left. They took everything except the curtains" (Raheb, I Am a Palestinian Christian, 109-111).

Step 3: Discuss the ways this story connects with your group's analysis.

## Activities

## Academic Instruction

## Part 1: Key Points

1. In pursuing the good of their societies, the churches in the Middle East have recognized the need for closer cooperation with each other and for a united voice on matters pertaining especially to Jerusalem. This is done through the Middle East Council of Churches, a body whose member churches come from all four of the main “families” of churches in the Middle East, making it the most ecumenical church organization in the world. (See the Appendix for an explanation of the church “families” in the Middle East.) The MECC has realized that throughout its history, Jerusalem has been a city of diversity – which must be respected. It has been a place of violence whenever one group has sought to dominate and homogenize the city. The crucifixion of Jesus, for example, happened under Roman imperial occupation (Ferguson).
2. Their distinctive contribution to peacemaking is their insistence that the status of Jerusalem must be resolved *first*, not last. Resolution of the status of Jerusalem is the key to the rest of the conflict, and, indeed, its resolution may provide keys to resolving conflicts in other parts of the world, too. The consensus of the churches is that five elements must be involved in decision-making about Jerusalem, two nations and three religions: Israelis, Palestinians, Jews, Christians, and Muslims.
3. Referring to Revelation 21:2, Naim Ateek writes, “[T]oday if Israelis and Palestinians are ready to be open to each other and to God, who should be acknowledged as the sole owner of the city of Jerusalem, it is possible to receive a new Jerusalem coming down from heaven” (“A Palestinian Theology of Jerusalem,” 105). Rev. Ramez Ansara of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hope in Ramallah has a picture in his mind of what such a Jerusalem might be like in the long run. He says,

Palestinians and Israelis have to live together. At the end, the settlements should be stopped, the political situation should be changed, there should be a peace agreement, more investment, job opportunities, open borders for Israelis and Palestinians to travel. It will be like that in the end. Palestinians and Israelis could live in each others’ countries if they want. They would have the freedom to choose (Ansara interview).
4. Perhaps some of Rev. Ramez’ inspiration comes from the stained-glass window of the Lutheran Church of Hope in Ramallah, of which he is pastor. It depicts the New Jerusalem of Revelation, chapters 22-23 with its river flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb and its tree of life with leaves for the healing of the nations. (For a picture of the window, see <http://www.elcjh.org/cong/ramallah/> and scroll down.) In contrast to Christian Zionism (such as that contained in the *Left Behind* series of novels), which sees predictions of inevitable warfare for Israelis and Palestinians in the book of Revelation, Palestinian Christians see Revelation as a book of hope (as American New Testament scholar Barbara Rossing also does in her book, *The Rapture Exposed*).
5. Bishop Munib Younan, formerly pastor of the same congregation was also inspired by these windows as he writes of a “feast of inclusion.”

Jesus still calls us to a Feast of Inclusion and a New Jerusalem where all are welcomed, all are equal and all are equally valued. We hold fast to our vision where someday, Christians, Muslims and Jews, Israelis and Palestinians - all people – will one day be able to freely celebrate our diverse but equally sacred feasts. We pray for a religious awakening of justice and reconciliation that puts an end to occupation and oppression, suicide bombings and drive-by shootings, terrorism and counter-terrorism, targeted assassinations and incursions. The Book of Revelation in Chapters 22-23 shares a vision of the river of life running through the Holy City, and on the banks of that river is the Tree of Life. The leaves of this tree are medicine for the Healing of the Nations. ...Keep Jerusalem a House of Prayer for all nations, open and shared by all, not a place of exclusion – for the healing of the nations (<http://www.elcjh.org/news/2005/oct.asp#art3>).

6. In the cause of peace, Palestinians and Israelis can be on the same side. Muslims who are engaged in trying to build a just peace insist that the problem ought not to be addressed as a conflict between religions but as a test of justice. Mustafa Abu Sway's position on the issue is characteristic of this approach.

If we look at the religion of the sovereigns, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, we find that all three lost and regained sovereignty over the Holy Land. This proves beyond any doubt that God did not give any particular people the upper hand in the absolute sense. It is my deep conviction that justice was and still is the criterion for any continued sovereignty. I read in Jewish scripture that "the land will vomit the unjust"! And in the words of the medieval Muslim scholar Ibn Taimiyyah: "God renders the just state victorious, even if it is non-Muslim" (Abu Sway 15).

7. Abu Sway envisions Jerusalem as an open city of two nations (Israeli and Palestinian) and three religions. "The Islamic worldview recognizes the organic relation to Judaism and Christianity that entails existential pluralism. Such pluralism, however, is not extended to sovereignty" (Abu Sway 14).

If the Jewish historical claims are based upon dwelling in the Holy Land, both Christians and Muslims have a lot of it. If it is theological relationship with the Holy Land, Christians and Muslims have it as well. If the issue is loving Jerusalem, no one has the right to claim that the other is less attached to it, be he/she Jewish, Christian or Muslim (Abu Sway 17).

8. No one can take seriously the history of Jerusalem, at one time or another under Jewish, Christian, or Muslim sovereignty, and still claim it as their "eternal" capital. Indeed, eternity is for God alone. Abu Sway cautions "members of the three faiths...against an idolatrous relationship with the land, where possessing the land exclusively at any price contradicts the very notion of monotheism"(Abu Sway 18).

9. Speaking out of the Jewish tradition, Martin Federman believes that doing the right thing is also what will ultimately contribute most toward the security of the State of Israel and its people. He writes,

Evacuating the settlements, ending the Occupation, withdrawing to the 1967 borders, and supporting the rebuilding of Palestinian society and a strong, viable Palestinian state is clearly the moral thing to do – but it is also clearly the ultimate solution to Israel's long-term security. Only in these circumstances can Israel defend itself militarily, reenergize its own economy and redirect energies to internal needs, and, at the same time, renew its sense of what it means to

be a *Jewish* state. ...If we choose correctly, we may well ensure the survival of the covenant and its special relationship. If we choose incorrectly, we lose everything we are and can be, even if a political entity survives. The choice is ours (Federman 74-75).

10. Mitri Raheb observes that Jerusalem was meant to be a place where people can come together. That is what King David had in mind when he built it. But now, in spite of the fact that it is called a "united city," it is in fact a deeply divided city (Raheb interview). As a Jew, Yehezkel Landau envisions a future for Jerusalem where division is turned into lively diversity.

The One God not only suffers or tolerates difference; that God has created individuals and nations with such striking differences in order to create a variegated human community that can celebrate diversity instead of feeling threatened by it. If both Jews and Palestinians can be brought to see, and to know deeply, that the Land belongs to God alone, and that by the grace of God both peoples belong to the Land (see Exodus 19:5-6), then a new political vision can be generated on this spiritual foundation (Landau 236).

11. Ehud Bandel, an Israeli rabbi from the Conservative movement within Judaism, says, "We Jewish Israelis have to liberate ourselves from the Occupation, for the Occupation corrupts us." But he sees that, in order for this to happen, Jewish Israelis also need to "liberate ourselves from the trauma of our past." He asks for help both from Palestinians and from citizens of other countries to do this. Surrounding Arab States can help through diplomatic assurances, but Rabbi Bandel makes an appeal particularly to religious people of whatever nation.

Our role now, as religious people, is to have hope. In spite of all the difficulties, do not let yourselves be discouraged. For despair is the enemy of peace. Progress is too slow, and it's frustrating. ...There will be a Palestinian state alongside Israel. My hope is that the two states will have open borders and good commercial relationships. We have a responsibility to be with those who are suffering, and to respond to their needs with empathy, but we must also encourage them and help them find hope. Despair is a fertile ground for those who don't want to have peace, and there are both Palestinians and Jews who want to use religion to continue this cycle of bloodshed. They say there is no earthly solution, and we will only find peace in the heavens above. But this is the will of God. ...Today, we must divide the land fairly among our two peoples, for the sake of peace (Bandel 19).

**Activity 1:**

Step 1: While participants form three groups, the leader distributes large newsprint or paper.

Step 2: Each group lists the similarities that they see in the visions for Jerusalem expressed by the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim believers quoted in the text.

Step 3: The groups then compare their lists with each other and discuss them.

## Part 2: Key Points

12. As Palestinian Christians try to be salt in their own societies, they call upon Christians in other parts of the world, particularly in the United States, to help. Rifat Kassis, while director of the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel, has made a list of actions for American and European Christians to consider:
  - a. Change the colonial-missionary-evangelistic mindset toward Palestinian Christians.
  - b. Help strengthen the churches' structures and help them fulfill their mission.
  - c. Offer moral and financial support and encouragement to Christians with the aim of helping them remain in their home country and become authentic witnesses within society.
  - d. Stop making erroneous accusations that Muslims persecute Palestinian Christians.
  - e. Participate in the struggle to end the Israeli occupation.
  - f. Visit Palestinian Christians to learn about their problems and to help them find solutions.
  - g. Work alongside Palestinian Christians in their attempt to rectify the misinterpretations of the Bible, especially on the part of so-called Zionist Christians.
  - h. Initiate and strengthen various levels of partnership with Palestinian Christians.
  - i. Try to understand the reality and the strength that Palestinian Christians are Arabs and they have been living in an Islamic culture for about 1,500 years (Kassis 19).
  
13. One important group that has taken up the challenge is Evangelicals for Middle East Understanding. They feel particularly responsible to demonstrate an evangelical alternative to Christian Zionism. Thus, in 2007, 34 Evangelical leaders wrote a letter to President George W. Bush that included the following paragraphs.

We, who sign this letter, represent large numbers of evangelicals throughout the U.S. who support justice for both Israelis and Palestinians. ...As evangelical Christians, we embrace the biblical promise to Abraham: "I will bless those who bless you." (Genesis 12:3). ...[W]e know that blessing and loving people (including Jews and the present State of Israel) does not mean withholding criticism when it is warranted. ...Perhaps the best way we can bless Israel is to encourage her to remember, as she deals with her neighbor Palestinians, the profound teaching on justice that the Hebrew prophets proclaimed so forcefully as an inestimably precious gift to the whole world. Historical honesty compels us to recognize that both Israelis and Palestinians have legitimate rights stretching back for millennia to the lands of Israel/Palestine. Both Israelis and Palestinians have committed violence and injustice against each other. The only way to bring the tragic cycle of violence to an end is for Israelis and Palestinians to negotiate a just, lasting agreement that guarantees both sides viable, independent, secure states. ...Israelis and Palestinians must both accept each other's right to exist (Evangelicals for Middle East Understanding, Letter to President George W. Bush, 27 July 2007 <http://www.emeu.net/article.php?item=31> [29 April 2008]).
  
14. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has begun its own effort in the form of a campaign called "Peace not Walls: Stand for Justice in the Holy Land." This campaign involves ELCA members in three types of action: Awareness (or Education), Accompaniment, and Advocacy. By working through this study, you are already increasing your

awareness. To accompany is to dwell with others in vulnerable and uncertain situations the way that God has dwelt with us. To advocate is to speak on behalf of those who have difficulty making their voices heard (<http://www.elca.org/peacenotwalls>).

15. The ELCA is firmly supportive of initiatives begun in 2007 by the United States under Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to see peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians through to their result. ELCA bishop, Mark Hansen, is an active participant in the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East (NILI), a group composed of Jewish, Christians, and Muslim leaders, which issued an important statement called "Arab-Israeli-Palestinian Peace: From Crisis to Hope" in 2006. It accompanied a letter to the secretary of state, encouraging her to move ahead in her efforts. The statement notes that much of the groundwork had already been done. The "Clinton Parameters" that were discussed in Taba, Egypt in January 2001, although not taken up by the incoming administration of President George W. Bush, inspired the Geneva Accord (2001). This was an unofficial negotiation by former Israeli Justice Minister Yossi Beilin and Palestinian Liberation Organization Executive Committee Member Yasser Abed Rabbo. The U.S.-led "Performance-Based Roadmap to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict" (to be overseen by a Quartet of the United States, the United Nations, Great Britain and Russia) followed in 2002. In 2003 the Arab League endorsed a Peace Initiative of its own and adopted it again in 2007. It affirms that the members of the League would consider themselves no longer in conflict with Israel but would establish normal diplomatic relations recognizing Israel as a state with secure borders when Israel ends the occupation by withdrawing to the 1967 borders, allowing for the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza with East Jerusalem as its capital and a just solution for resettling the refugees. In their statement the NILI participants suggest building upon the "principles, benchmarks and practical ideas for peace that emerged from [these] earlier initiatives", such as their "realistic compromises for final status issues, including: borders and security arrangements, settlements, refugees and Jerusalem" ([http://www.nili-mideastpeace.org/downloads/2006\\_12FromCrisisToHope.pdf](http://www.nili-mideastpeace.org/downloads/2006_12FromCrisisToHope.pdf)). The Jewish American organization Brit Tzedek v'Shalom (Jewish Alliance for Justice and Peace) has posted links to all of these peace initiatives on their website at: <http://btvshalom.org/resources/peace/docs.shtml>. Such proposals made by national leaders around the world, although not the basis for our religious faith, are certainly in accord with what many Christians and Muslims and Jews have been pressing toward for many years as steps that would make room for peace in a region rich in significance for so many people.
  
16. For that reason, in preparation for an international meeting sponsored by the United States in November 2007, with the purpose of relaunching serious peace negotiations between Israel, the Palestinian Authority, and the Arab states, a new Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land was developed. Its members, leaders in the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities of the Holy Land, include Bishop Younan of the ELCJHL, Latin Patriarch Michel Sabbah, Chief Rabbi David Rosen, and Sheikh Tayser Rajab al-Tamimi. They met with members of the United States Congress and produced a statement in which they pledge to establish ways of working together to end the occupation and bring security to both Israelis and Palestinians. They write:

All of us believe in one Creator and Guide of the Universe. We believe that the essence of religion is to worship Him and respect the life and dignity of all human beings, regardless of religion, nationality and gender. We accordingly commit ourselves to using our positions of leadership, and the influence of our good offices, to advance these sacred values, to prevent religion from being used as a source of conflict, and instead serve the goals of just and comprehensive peace and reconciliation (<http://www.elcjh.org/news/2007/nov.asp>).

17. Noting that religious sites themselves, particularly in Jerusalem, have been centers of controversy and violence, they pledge to reflect together “on the future of Jerusalem, support the designation of the Old City of Jerusalem as a World Heritage Site, work to secure open access to the Old City for all communities, and seek a common vision for this city which all of us regard as holy”(<http://www.elcjh.org/news/2007/nov.asp>).

**Activity 2:**

Step 1: Take some time individually to think about the most important thing you have learned from this extended focus on Jerusalem.

Step 2: Share your insights with one another.

Step 3: Then together consider what action you think is important to make in response. Explore the “Peace not Walls” website at: <http://www.elca.org/peacenotwalls> for ideas. “Churches for Middle East Peace” (CMEP) also has a resource center for material on Jerusalem, focusing on advocacy. (CMEP “is a coalition of 22 public policy offices of national churches and agencies – Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant [including the ELCA’s Washington Office].” The long experience of its member churches in the Middle East has resulted in policies in support of a just peace between two secure, viable states, Palestine and Israel, with a shared Jerusalem.) (<http://www.cmep.org>). Taking into account everyone’s ideas, resolve on one action to carry out together. Make sure that practical matters are discussed sufficiently so that you are able actually to carry out this action.

## Appendix

### The Four Basic "Families" of Churches to which Palestinian Christians Belong

#### **The Eastern Orthodox Family**

Represented in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories mainly by the Greek Orthodox Church, to which most Palestinian Christians belong. The website of the Greek Patriarch of Jerusalem is <<http://jerusalem-patriarchate.org/>>. This family also includes the Russian Orthodox Church and the Orthodox Church of Romania, which are mainly immigrant churches in Israel.

#### **The Oriental Orthodox Family**

This family includes the Armenian Apostolic Church (of which the website of the Patriarch of Jerusalem is <<http://www.armenian-patriarchate.org/>>), the Coptic [Egyptian] Orthodox Church (of which the website of the Pope is <<http://www.coptic-pope.org/>>), the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and the Syriac Orthodox Church (which has authorized an informational website at <<http://sor.cua.edu/>>). The Syriac Orthodox Church represents the oldest Christian tradition in Palestine. Much of the liturgy is still sung in Aramaic, the language of Jesus, although some accommodation is made for the Arabic language spoken by its members in everyday life.

#### **The Catholic Family**

The Catholic Church is known as the Latin Church in the Middle East. The Archbishop of the Latin church in Jerusalem is called the Latin Patriarch. The current holder of this office is Michel Sabbah, a Palestinian, and his website is <<http://go.to/nonviolence>>. Other churches in the Catholic family have come from the Orthodox tradition and have remained Orthodox in their style of worship and in their structure except that they acknowledge the spiritual authority of the Pope, the Bishop of Rome. These various churches became Catholic in the 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. In Palestine and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, they are "the Patriarchal Exarchates of the Greek Catholic, Maronite, Syriac Catholic, and Armenian Catholic churches; and the Chaldean Patriarchal Vicariate" (Bailey 152).

#### **The Evangelical [Protestant] Family**

This is the smallest family, comprised mainly of Anglicans and Lutherans. The bishop of the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East is a Palestinian named Suheil Dawani, elected in 2007. The website of his diocese is <<http://www.j-diocese.org/>>. The bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jordan and the Holy Land is Munib Younan, who is responsible for this project. The church's website is <<http://www.elcjh.org/>>.

**For discussion:** Do you belong to any of these Christian traditions? If you do, perhaps you could visit the website of your sister church in Jerusalem and learn about the lives and work of its members to share with your group. If you do not, you could probably locate a congregation from one of these traditions near you and visit together on a Sunday to join them in worship. Calling ahead to make an arrangement to speak with someone while you are there is always a good idea. Some congregations may ask that you wear long sleeves and that women bring a scarf to cover their hair during worship. Inquire about communion practices.

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