

Middle East Network Newsletter

December 2, 2010

Join CMEP's new national Christian campaign; send Christmas greetings to the President

“[For the Peace of Jerusalem: Christians for Israeli-Palestinian Peace Now](#)” is a year-long effort of 26 (and the number is growing) Christian churches and organizations to engage Christians across the country in the pursuit of a just and secure peace for Israelis and Palestinians in the Holy Land.

The initial campaign action is to **send thousands of Christmas greetings to President Obama** as a way to show him and all those who hear of our ecumenical efforts that we expect peace with justice and security for all Palestinians and Israelis; and, in the spirit of Advent, we expect it soon.

How you can help:

- Sign and send an online card at www.peaceofjerusalem.org.
- Organize a card-mailing campaign in your synod or congregation. Cards should be signed and mailed (in one big envelope) to CMEP before Wed. Dec. 22 for delivery to the White House. Find planning advice and sample messages by clicking on the Take Action tab.
- Print and send the ELCA-specific Christmas card (easy to print on 8 ½ x 11" paper) available at www.elca.org/peacenotwalls.

Dar Al-Kalima College, Bethlehem, celebrates new campus

On November 30 a dedication ceremony was held to inaugurate the Mt. Murair campus of Dar Al-Kalima College in Bethlehem, Palestine. Bright Stars of Bethlehem, a U.S.-based not-for-profit organization whose mission is “to ensure that Christianity survives and thrives in the Middle East and to bring hope and healing to people in need,” was instrumental in fundraising for the college. The Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb, president of Bright Stars of Bethlehem, said, “[Dar Al-Kalima College is a direct answer to the current shortage of higher education institutions in Palestine and a beacon of hope for future generations.](#)”

The Rev. Robert O. Smith of the ELCA wrote in a letter celebrating the new campus, “[This college building, standing as part of a larger complex designed to holistically address the needs of people in the Bethlehem region, is a shining example of local leadership working toward the edification of all God’s people.](#)”

Fourth annual Bethlehem prayer service to be held December 18 at National Cathedral

A joint simulcast service with the people of Bethlehem will be held Saturday, December 18, 2010 at 10:00 a.m. Eastern Time at the Washington National Cathedral in Washington, DC. In Bethlehem the service will be held at the Christmas Lutheran Church. Those not in Washington or Bethlehem are encouraged to watch the service live at www.nationalcathedral.org.

Participants in DC include: The Most Reverend Katharine Jefferts Schori, Presiding Bishop and Primate of The Episcopal Church; The Right Reverend John Bryson Chane, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington; The Very Reverend Samuel T. Lloyd III, Dean of Washington National Cathedral; and The Reverend Richard H. Graham, Bishop, Metropolitan DC Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

In Bethlehem, participants include The Right Reverend Suheil Dawani, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, the Right Reverend Munib Younan, Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land and President of the Lutheran World Federation, and the Rev. Mitri Raheb of Bethlehem's Christmas Lutheran Church.

PIEF invites sharing of prayers for peace

The Palestine-Israel Ecumenical Forum (PIEF) of the World Council of Churches is inviting friends to share prayers for Bethlehem during advent. Michel Nseir of the World Council of Churches explains, “Since December 2000 Pax Christi has been sending out peace messages to friends in Bethlehem. PIEF endorses and joins this call

and hopes member churches of the World Council of Churches will send out wishes and prayers for justice and peace to Bethlehem.” For more information, click [here](#).

Advent resources with a Holy Land theme available online

“**Prince of Peace**” 2010 Advent/Christmas Sunday Reflections from Christians in the Holy Land are available [here](#).

Journey to Bethlehem in Advent by ELCA Denver lay leader Jan Miller can be found [here](#).

“**Fear builds walls – Hope builds bridges,**” is an online Advent calendar produced by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) and the Church of Sweden. The calendar includes [You Tube greetings](#) from young people in Palestine and Sweden.

Churches for Middle East Peace gets new website

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) has a completely new and updated website. Find [Christian and Interfaith Statements](#), news, resources, photos and more at www.cmep.org.

Film, “Budrus,” expands theatrical release

“Budrus,” the award-winning film about Palestinian non-violence, is expanding its U.S. release. To see a trailer and to find showings, [click here](#).

New Gaza report published

Amnesty International and 21 other human rights and aid groups published a November 30 report on conditions in Gaza, titled, “Dashed Hopes: Continuation of the Gaza Blockade.” The 12-page report outlines the struggles which the people of Gaza continue to face and states, “Lifting the blockade of Gaza remains a legal, economic and political imperative for those seeking a lasting resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The time for credible and effective action is now.” Read the [full report](#).



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