

Pre-Council Youth Workshop

The Youth Council Members and Stewards gathered in Jerusalem to participate in the LWF Pre-Council Youth Workshop under the theme of “Called to a Ministry of Reconciliation” between 26 and 30 August 2005.

We visited the Augusta-Victoria Hospital and we were introduced to the work of LWF in the region. We also discussed issues of religion and conflict with representatives of the Jewish and Islamic faiths.

We listened to the experiences and stories of local Palestinian people and our fellow Palestinian Stewards. During our workshop we shared our lives and fellowship with Palestinians in fun, but also great sadness.

We are thankful for the opportunity to have been able to spend time with representatives of the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel, which is an initiative of the World Council of Churches (“EAPPI”). EAPPI provides for international people to live with Palestinian people in areas of conflict to provide a presence and witness to events that occur. EAPPI took us to four locations where the organization is present: Bethlehem, Hebron, Jayyous and Yanoun. During our time we witnessed the real life situation of many Palestinian people, living under harsh conditions. We spoke to local people who welcomed us with great hospitality.

The presence of international representatives in Palestinian villages and towns is essential to helping to try to normalize the relationship between Israelis and Palestinians, living closely together. One of the EAPPI volunteers told us that simply by the presence of international representatives violence is less likely to occur.

We are convinced of the importance of the programs run by EAPPI and support its continuance. **We therefore call on all member churches to:**

- 1. provide ongoing financial support for EAPPI and its programs, so that EAPPI can not only continue its work, but also expand its operations to other areas in the region; and**
- 2. promote the work of EAPPI amongst LWF member churches and encourage and provide opportunities for people within LWF to act as volunteers for EAPPI.**

During the workshop we saw and heard many shocking and disturbing things. We have also spent many hours with the Palestinian Stewards in our group and have come to have a deep love and concern for them and their future. When we came to write our message, words failed us. A message seemed inadequate. We therefore decided to write a prayer based on our experiences and to honor what we have seen and heard. In Matthew 5 v 44 it says “ Love your enemies...” Jesus loved his enemies. He healed the ear of the soldier who arrested him and let himself be crucified. Jesus told us to love our enemies, like he did. We hear this call and appreciate that it would benefit the world to follow it, but it is a very hard call to follow. This

is especially so in places of conflict, like Palestine. We feel disappointment, hopelessness, and even sometimes hate in our hearts, but we long to live a life free from hate and enmity. We look forward to our Lord's promise in John 6 v 57 that "...the one who feeds on me will live because of me". Therefore we bring our sorrow, hope and hopelessness to our God and pray the following.

Dear Lord

You said come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. We are sure that You are the only one who will give us rest.

We thank you for the signs of your presence in Palestine and Israel: the hospitality of the people, the work of volunteers, both local and international and the work of the Christian communities in Palestine and the Holy Land.

Lord in Your Mercy, hear our prayer

There are many conflicts in this world amongst nations, denominations, families and people. Spread Your peace all over the world and in all situations, especially Palestine, Iraq, Lebanon and Africa. Lord we implore you in particular to bring peace to Palestine and Israel, because your children need your help. We cry out to you with our brothers and sisters in these places.

Lord in Your Mercy, hear our prayer

Lord you are the Way, the Truth and the Life, please help people to forget the evil that has been committed against them, in order to fulfill Your Ministry of forgiveness. Please have mercy on the land of Palestine and Israel and give Palestinians and Israelis the ability to forgive one another and be reconciled to one another as You planned it.

Lord in Your Mercy, hear our prayer

Lord, forgive us that we have not taken any action in the face of injustice. Have angels on Earth open the eyes of the world. We pray for those who are misguided. Guide them and open their eyes.

Lord in Your Mercy, hear our prayer

We want to speak out against the injustices that have occurred. Give us the courage to speak the truth, ask questions, and not always accept what we are told, so that the world is aware of what is occurring.

Lord in Your Mercy, hear our prayer

We pray for the leaders of our world that they may strive for freedom and peace. We pray that our Church can provide leadership to achieve reconciliation.

Lord in Your Mercy, hear our prayer

Thank you for all the volunteers that are present in the villages, sharing the love you gave us, with the oppressed and the oppressors. Lord more volunteers are needed to help the Palestinians not with money, but with their presence and support, both spiritually and psychologically. Let people heed your call to serve where they are needed.

Lord in Your Mercy, hear our prayer

We trust in You our Lord that in the beautiful land where you were born, peace will find a way into all hearts even in the midst of violence happening day after day. Be the guardian of the dreams of the children and the hope of the people in Palestine and Israel, so that they shall not lose them amongst the violence. When the only way of communication is throwing stones, let Easter happen again and hope be resurrected.

Lord in Your Mercy, hear our prayer

Heavenly Father you are the Creator of Heaven and Earth, You said ask and it shall be given to you, You are a miraculous God, we ask for Your peace for the land of Israel and Palestine, however not our will but Your will be done, we put everything into Your hands.

Amen

Our final challenge is that LWF takes this prayer and arrange for it to be prayed amongst member churches and that a worship service be prepared to be used for member churches to focus on reconciliation, especially in the context of the conflict in Palestine and Israel.

Thank You

Prajna Sweta Rao – India
Geir Konráð Theodórsson – Iceland
Melinda Stuart-Adams – Australia
Ashraf Tannous – Palestine
Slavka Danielova – Slovakia
Peter Filo- Slovakia
Gudmundur Bjorn Thorbjörnsson – Iceland
Mahira Kassis – Palestine
Irene Zeiden – Palestine
Sari Kafiety – Jerusalem (Palestinian)
Rami Kafiety – Jerusalem (Palestinian)
Kazuhiro Sekino – Japan
Milita Poskiene - Lithuania
Klára Balicza – Hungary
Riikka Myllys – Finland
Thomas Jensch – Germany

AGENDA

MEETING OF THE LWF COUNCIL

Jerusalem – Bethlehem, 31 August - 6 September 2005

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Michel Ngoy Mulunda – Democratic Republic of Congo

Hedwig Partaj - Austria

Julia Elisabeth Heyde - Germany