

# Religious Diversity In Israel and Palestine

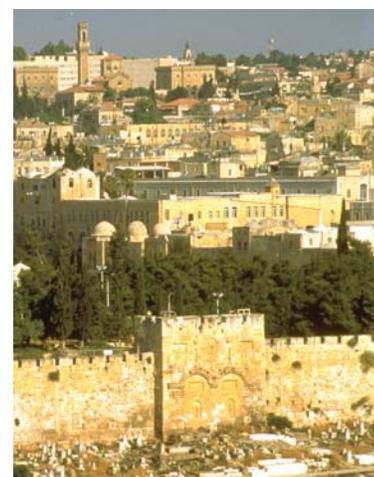
June 14–27, 2011

Co-sponsored by the Siraj Center (Palestine)  
and the Middle East Task Force (PCUSA)

with **Dr. Pauline Coffman** and **Dr. Paul Parker**

## Join with us to...

- ...discover the religious diversity of Israel and Palestine
- ...explore the impact of political conflict on religious practice
- ...consider religious resources for a just resolution of the political conflict



The Middle East Task Force was appointed in the fall of 1974 by the Committee on Church and Society of the Chicago Presbytery, to implement the recommendations of the 186th General Assembly that “presbyteries encourage study and foster dialogue in response to the current Middle East conflict.” One of its purposes is “to serve as a support network to Christians in the Middle East,” and this special tour will help to “fulfill our educational, support, and advocacy missions” and “to work in tandem with other organizations who share our commitment for a peaceful, just, and non-violent resolution of the Middle East conflict.”



Siraj Center for Holy Land Studies is a non-governmental nonprofit organization based in Beit Sahour, Palestine. It aims to create links between Palestinian people and people from around the globe through educational tourism, interfaith and ecumenical dialogue, culture and youth exchange programs. Through its many local connections, Siraj works directly with communities and organizations in Bethlehem, the West Bank, Palestine and the Holy Land, and the entire Middle East. Siraj center also aims to reveal the human face of the people of Palestine that is not shown normally at Western Main stream media, by organizing interaction with local Palestinians families.

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Participants in **Religious Diversity in Israel and Palestine** will explore the six religions of Israel and Palestine in their cultural richness and political reality. This is a listening tour: we will take notice of devotees' concerns, observe religious practices, discern group beliefs and values, visit many of their holy sites, and ponder the religious experiences of the peoples of Israel and Palestine—the Baha'i of Acre and Haifa; the Druze of Golan Heights; the Samaritans of Nablus; the Jews of Jerusalem and the settlements; the Christians of Nazareth, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem; and the Muslims of Hebron, Ramallah, and al Quds. Special attention will be given to the diversity of Jewish life, the vibrancy of Islam, and the ten Christian communities officially recognized as indigenous. In the midst of political conflict and social upheavals, how have such beautiful and richly textured religions survived?

Religious Diversity in Israel and Palestine is not a Holy Land tour—although we will visit many incredibly sacred sites.

It is not a religious pilgrimage—although our time in Israel and Palestine may be profoundly spiritual.

It is not a political fact-finding mission—although everything is political.

And it is definitely not a tourist's vacation—although we will swim in the Dead Sea; shop in the Old City; munch on Arabic salad; and devour falafel.

We will visit Yad Vashem and the Wailing Wall; climb Masada, Mt. Olives, and Mt. Gerizim; marvel at the Harem al Sharif's Dome of the Rock and al-Aqsa Mosques; explore Crusader ruins; meet a "good Samaritan"; fall silent at the burial site of the Patriarchs; gaze at the birth and burial sites of Jesus; admire the wisdom and the mosque of Omar; eat fish from the Sea of Galilee; weep at the Valley of Tears; and celebrate life.

## **Tuesday, June 14**      **Departure**

Depart Chicago's O'Hare International Airport on a transatlantic flight to Tel Aviv.

## **Wednesday, June 15**      **Tel Aviv / Jerusalem**

Arrive this afternoon at Tel Aviv, Ben Gurion International Airport and be met by our guide and travel to Jerusalem via motor coach. Enjoy a brief walking tour of the Old City before dinner and overnight at an Old City hotel.



## **Thursday, June 16**      **Jerusalem**

Visit to Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Museum this morning. Drive to Sabeel Ecumenical Theological Center Eucharist, a brief Bible study, and join in "The Wave of Prayer," followed by a light lunch. Hear about the "effects of Zionism on the Palestinian Christian Communities," the work of Sabeel, or a topic related to religious diversity of Israelis and Palestinians. Participate in an evening discussion on the role of the Holocaust in Israel's identity. Dinner and overnight in Jerusalem.

## **Friday, June 17**      **Masada / Dead Sea**

Drive to Masada this morning, taking the cable car to this historical site to discover its contemporary political significance. Masada, Herod's mountain fortress was the last stand of the Jewish revolt against Rome. On the journey back to Jerusalem, stop for a swim in the mineral rich waters of the Dead Sea where it is impossible to sink! This evening, enjoy a discussion on the role of Masada in Israel's identity. Dinner and overnight in Jerusalem.



## **Saturday, June 18**      **Jerusalem**

Visit the Wailing Wall this morning, one of the holiest Jewish sites, in order to observe the state established religion. Next visit the Harem al-Sharif (Dome of the Rock) and witness the limits of 'religious freedom' in Israel. Visit with Bishop Munib Younan (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land,

ELCJHL), Patriarch Michael Sabbah (Latin Catholic Church), or the Maronite Convent of Jerusalem for an overview of the effect of Zionism on their churches.

This afternoon, visit with individual representatives of Jewish pro-Zionist groups and Jewish anti-Zionist groups: ultra orthodox, settlers, and other conservative religious parties as well as secularists. Enjoy some free time to explore Jerusalem on your own this afternoon. Dinner and overnight in Jerusalem.

## **Sunday, June 19**      **Jerusalem**

Walk the Via Dolorosa (Way of Suffering) and conclude with morning worship in the Old City Lutheran Church or at St. George's Anglican Church. Visit the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, followed by an afternoon or evening discussion with Dr. Mustapha Abu Sway (or another Muslim representative) on the importance of prayer at al Aqsa and the effect of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict on Muslim religious practice.



## **Monday, June 20**      **Bethlehem**

Drive to Bethlehem this morning to visit the Mosque of Omar (and the older first mosque outside Bethlehem, if time permits) and learn their history. Visit the Church of the Nativity and see the star that marks the birthplace of Christ. In the afternoon visit Bethlehem University for a tour and lecture/discussion on the effect conflict has on the religious practice of Palestinians. Visit with Jad Isaac, Director-General of the Applied Research Institute of Jerusalem to discuss "The Economic Impact of the Israeli/Palestinian Conflict on Palestinian Christians, Churches and Denominations."

## **Tuesday, June 21**      **Hebron**

Drive to Hebron's Tomb of the Patriarchs to witness the limits of religious freedom – and visit the Old City and market. Spend time with Hebron families, a religious leader or possibly a refugee camp to learn about the effect of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict on their religious practices. Visit a settlement and listen to the effect of the Israeli/Palestinian



conflict on the religious practices of those in a settlement. Later in the day, visit the Greek Catholic Church of Bethlehem (Father Yacoub Abu Saada) and the Greek Orthodox Church of Beit Jala (Father George Shahwan) on the return to Bethlehem for dinner and overnight.

### Wednesday, June 22 Ramallah

This morning, drive to Ramallah to visit al Mukata, an important cultural and political center for the Palestinian National Authority. Yaser Arafat's tomb is inside this compound. Learn about Christianity in the West Bank from Christian group leaders such as Ms. Jean Zaru of the Friends, Dr. Mustafa Barghouti, and others. Dr. Hanna Nasir and Mr. Sam Bahour will discuss the political and economic situation of Palestinians. Mrs. Tania Nasir will discuss the "Impact of Israeli/Palestinian Strife on the Arts in Palestine." If time permits, visit the Edward Said Conservatory to learn how the Israeli/Palestinian strife has impacted music in Palestine. Dinner and overnight in Ramallah.



### Thursday, June 23 Samaria

Drive to Nablus (biblical Shechem) to meet Samaritan leaders and for a tour of the Samaritan museum on Mt. Gerizim, the Samaritan Israelites' holy place. Visit the site thought to house Joseph's Tomb. Meet with Greek Catholic Church pastor, Father Yousef Sa'adeh, to understand the state of the church in Nablus and its relationship with Muslims under in the midst of Mt. Gerizim strife. If time permits, enjoy a walking tour of Old Nablus. Overnight in Nablus.

### Friday, June 24 Nazareth

Depart early this morning for the Golan Heights. Visit the Druze village of Majdal Shams and meet the secular Druze civil rights leader for a lecture/discussion on "The Druze of Golan."

For further information, contact:

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Visit the "Valley of the Tears," where the fiercest battles of the Yom Kippur War took place. Drive to Nazareth, the boyhood home of Jesus. See the Church of the Annunciation, built on the traditional spot where the angel Gabriel prophesied to Mary. Listen to local activist imams, such as Nazem Abu Salim, a leader of one of the Muslim groups in Israel (Northern Islamic Movement) that called for a boycott of Pope Benedict's visit to Nazareth. Dinner and overnight in Nazareth.

### Saturday, June 25 Ibilin / Haifa

Drive to Mar Elias Educational Institution in Ibilin for a tour and overview of the history of MEEI. If possible, meet with Archbishop Elias Chacour of the Greek Catholic Church, who will share his experience as a Palestinian Christian in the State of Israel. Visit Daliyat el-Carmel, a Druze village with a mosque that was recently renovated in 2008. Enjoy a class discussion comparing these Druze with the Druze of Golan. Continue to Haifa for dinner and overnight.



### Sunday, June 26 Haifa / Acre

Today's explorations will include the services of a Bahai guide, beginning with the Bahai Gardens of Haifa, surrounding the shining golden dome of the Bahai Shrine, the world center of the Bahai religion. Drive to Acre (Akko) to see the Bab's memorial, with an introduction to Bahai by a devotee. After dinner, drive to the airport for a late-night departure.

### Monday, June 27 Return to USA

Arrive Chicago late this morning.

**Tour Price from Chicago O'Hare International Airport:  
\$4,029 per person, based on sharing a double room**

**Single Room Supplement: \$395**

**Optional Group Travel Insurance: \$285 (nonrefundable)**

*Tour price is based on a total of 18 persons. The price will decrease with additional participants or increase with fewer than 16 participants. Deposits received after March 9, 2011, will likely incur additional charges due to supplier contract terms.*

#### TOUR PRICE INCLUDES:

- Round-trip air fare from Chicago O'Hare International Airport
- Accommodations in tourist class hotels with private facilities
- Breakfast and dinner daily
- Services of experienced, English-speaking licensed guides
- Sightseeing and entrance fees
- Service charges and local taxes
- Airline taxes and fuel surcharges
- Tips to guides, drivers and hotel staff
- Donations and honoraria to organizations and speakers

# Tour Features and Conditions

Please read all Tour Features and Conditions carefully.  
Payment of tour deposit constitutes acceptance of these conditions.

**Air Transportation:** Air transportation is restricted to the services of any IATA carrier, in economy class based on nonrefundable fare. Travelers are responsible to provide their names as they appear in their passport. Ticketing will be made 30-45 days prior to departure, after which there will be a charge for name corrections. Tour price includes current airline taxes of \$94, which are subject to change until ticketed. *Tour participants are responsible for any increase in airline taxes imposed by the airline.*

**Accommodations:** Based on two or more persons sharing a room in accommodations listed in itinerary, or similar. Single rooms are subject to availability at an additional charge of \$395. *If a passenger cannot supply a roommate, the passenger is responsible for the additional charge.*

**Meals:** In-flight meals and snacks are served according to airline policy. Breakfast and dinner will be provided daily. Beverages with dinners are not included. Opportunity will be given for participants to purchase lunches on their own.

**Transfers and Baggage:** Transfers between airports and hotels upon arrival and departure are included in the tour price, including handling of one medium-sized suitcase per person, not exceeding 62 dimensional inches (length plus width plus height) or weighing more than a maximum of 50 pounds. *Due to limited luggage storage space on motor coaches, it is important that each person bring only ONE piece of checked baggage. In addition, a flight bag or overnight case may be taken, which must be handled by the passenger at all times. Baggage allowance is subject to change according to airline policy.*

**Sightseeing and Entrance Fees:** Are included as indicated in itinerary, using private motor coach or other conveyance, with local guides where necessary.

**Tips and Taxes:** Service charges and taxes on accommodations are included. Tips to guides, drivers, and hotel staff are included, as well as donations and honoraria to organizations and speakers. Tips for personal services are not included and are at tour member's own expense.

**Not Included:** Passport fee, travel protection insurance, and expenses of a purely personal nature are not included. Transportation from your home to Chicago/O'Hare International Airport and return is not included. Checked luggage fee(s) charged by the airline.

**Deposit and Payment:** Reservations may be secured upon payment of a deposit of \$500 per person. You will be invoiced for final payment, which is due April 15, 2011.

**MTS Cancellation Conditions:** Refund of full deposit (less \$100 administrative fee) will be made up to March 9, 2011. If cancellation occurs between March 10 and May 10, 2011, a fee of \$500 plus unrecoverable airline, hotel and tour operator payments. There is no refund after May 10, 2011, or for unused tour services.

**Protect Your Investment:** MTS TRAVEL strongly recommends purchasing this primary insurance coverage. If you purchase the protection plan upon enrollment with your deposit, any restriction on pre-existing conditions is waived. If protection plan is purchased after the deposit is received, all coverage is subject to exclusion of pre-existing conditions. Certain conditions, exclusions and limitations apply as set out in the Evidence of Coverage and Confirmation of Coverage, which you will receive upon receipt of deposit. You will have ten days to review coverage and cancel your policy.

## Following is a brief description of coverage:

- This protection plan will cover you for cancellation fees if you need to cancel because of death, injury or illness to you, your traveling companion or your immediate family member.
- Medical Evacuation: \$250,000
- Medical Expenses: \$25,000
- Baggage loss/delay: \$1,500/\$250

**A valid passport is required.** If you do not have a passport, you should apply for one immediately. Information on obtaining a passport will be provided upon receipt of deposit. If you now have a passport, please verify that it is valid until December 28, 2011. A visa for Israel/Palestine is not required for U.S. citizens.

**All rates and fares are based on current information and are subject to change.** Rates are based on a minimum of 18 persons traveling together.

**Deviations:** Any individual making a change in travel arrangements apart from this group program will be charged a service fee of \$100 per person, plus any additional air or land costs incurred.

**The itinerary as outlined is an indication of sequence and sites to be included in the tour program.** However, the tour operator reserves the right to alter or change the itinerary and/or the sites included should it be deemed necessary due to local conditions, time restrictions, or other circumstances.

**In the ever-changing world situation,** MTS TRAVEL recommends personal monitoring of news about your destination. For the latest country information from the U.S. Dept. of State, please visit [www.mtstravel.com](http://www.mtstravel.com) and click "U.S. State Department Travel Warnings" in the middle of our home page.

**Guests with disabilities or dietary restrictions** should inquire in advance about whether their needs can be accommodated.

## Responsibility

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**Reservation Form**  
**Religious Diversity in Israel and Palestine**  
**June 14–27, 2011**  
**with Dr. Pauline Coffman & Dr. Paul Parker**

This tour price reflects special group rates.

Deposits received after DATE, will likely incur additional charges due to supplier contract terms.

**To be assured of reservations, please complete and mail this form, along with your deposit of \$500 per person to:  
MTS TRAVEL, 124 E. Main St., 4th Fl., Ephrata, PA 17522, .**

**Please reserve space as follows:**

**Enclosed is my deposit check of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (\$500 per person. )**

**Please make check payable to MTS TRAVEL or complete the credit card payment information below.**

**(Please Print)**

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Name 2 (as it appears on passport): \_\_\_\_\_

Nickname for name badge: \_\_\_\_\_

Nickname for name badge: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (evening) \_\_\_\_\_ (days) \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Birthdate: \_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate: \_\_\_\_\_

**Passport Copies:** Please provide a clear photocopy of the photo and signature page of your passport. This is required for all international tours.

**Room Type:**  Twin/Double  
 Single

Rooming With: \_\_\_\_\_

**Travel Protection Insurance—Check One:**

I/we wish to be covered by cancellation insurance.

(Include \$285 per person with your deposit check. The \$285 is not refundable.)

I/we do NOT wish to be covered by the cancellation insurance.

**Credit Card Information:**

**Please Charge:**  My Deposit of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ + \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Travel Insurance = \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Total Charge

Mastercard  Visa  Discover  American Express

Name as it appears on card (printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Security Code: \_\_\_\_\_

***I have read the Tour Features and Conditions for this tour and agree to the terms listed therein.***

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_