

Moving deeper into Holy Week, Presiding Bishop visits Bethlehem, Nazareth

Day's themes are ecumenical hospitality and educational efforts to bridge cultural difference

By Mary Frances Schjonberg
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[Episcopal News Service – Bethlehem and Nazareth] The gift of spending Holy Week in the Holy Land grew deeper and more real on March 28 for Presiding Bishop Michael Curry.



Some members of Jerusalem's Jerusalem Peacebuilders talk with Presiding Bishop Michael Curry after their presentation at Christ School, a ministry of Christ Church, the Anglican parish in Nazareth.

Photo: Mary Frances Schjonberg/Episcopal News Service

Young people at Christ School, a ministry of Christ Church, the Anglican parish in Nazareth, later in the day spoke to the group about their efforts to make peace among Muslim, Jewish and Christian young people. To that end, [Jerusalem Peacebuilders](#), which partners with the diocese, promotes what it calls “transformational, person-to-person encounters among the young people of Jerusalem, the United States and the Holy Land.” Moreover, it provides them with the opportunities, relationships and skills to become future leaders for peace in the global community.

Jerusalem Peacebuilders also oversees four youth leadership programs in New Haven, Connecticut; Houston, Texas, and Brattleboro, Vermont. Each summer, interfaith residential program runs two weeks and includes leadership skills, dialogues, guest speakers and a faith-based component. Participants who complete all three years become counselors in the programs to further strengthen and develop their leadership and peace-building knowledge and skills.

The [United Thank Offering](#) recently gave JPB’s Galilee director, Jack Karn, a 2018 Young Adult Grant of \$2,500 to help fund new in-school leadership and peacebuilding programs in the Galilee area of the Holy Land where Nazareth is located. Karn is from the Diocese of Vermont.

One young Palestinian Arab student told the group that he joined the organization because, as a Muslim, he wanted to build peace. “I want a solution to all the violence,” Yousef Hassan said.

He also said the program has helped him know himself better and become “a calmer person.” Because of all that goes on where he lives, he said, “it’s really hard to be a peaceful person or a calm person. Most people are really aggressive.”

Another Christian student, Ghenwa Abu Ahmad, said the JPB’s experiential programming taught her to see herself in others. “You see how similar you are, despite our differences in appearances or religion,” she said.

Curry was in the fifth day of a Holy Week pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The presiding bishop was accompanied by the Rev. Charles Robertson, canon to the presiding bishop for ministry beyond the Episcopal Church; The Rev. Margaret Rose, Episcopal Church deputy for ecumenical and interfaith relations; the Rev. Robert Edmunds, Episcopal Church Middle East partnership officer; and Sharon Jones, Curry’s executive coordinator.

– *The Rev. Mary Frances Schjonberg is interim managing editor of the Episcopal News Service.*