

# Religious Diversity In Israel and Palestine

## June 12–25, 2012

Co-led by **Dr. Pauline Coffman** and **Dr. Paul Parker**

Join Dr. Coffman and Dr. Parker 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



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. of Olives, and Mt. Gerizim; marvel at the Harem al Sharif's Dome of the Rock and al-Aqsa Mosque; 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.

**Dr. Pauline Coffman** has experience leading seminars to Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Israel/Palestine. She studied in Beirut as an undergraduate and is active in the Middle East Task Force of Chicago Presbytery.

**Dr. Paul Parker** has been a professor at Elmhurst College (Elmhurst, Illinois) since 1987, where he teaches courses in Christian social ethics, world religions, and religion in America. He has experience leading student tours to India, Turkey, and Jordan.

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**Tuesday, June 12****Departure**

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

**Wednesday, June 13****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 the Jerusalem hotel.

**Thursday, June 14****Jerusalem**

Visit to Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Museum, this morning. After lunch drive to Sabeel Ecumenical Theological Center to meet with a representative of Sabeel to learn about the contemporary situation for Christians in Israel and Palestine. Dinner and overnight in Jerusalem.

**Friday, June 15****Masada / Dead Sea**

Drive to Masada this morning, taking the cable car to this historical site, and discover Masada's contemporary political significance. Discuss the role of Masada in shaping Israel's identity. 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! If time permits, visit Jericho and consider its agricultural importance to Palestine and its political relevance to Jordan, Israel, and Palestine. This evening, enjoy dinner and a discussion with Jeff Halper on the role of a secular Jew in the Israel / Palestine conflict and reconciliation. Overnight in Jerusalem.

**Saturday, June 16****Jerusalem**

This morning we will have a discussion with Dr. Mustapha Abu Sway (or another Muslim representative) on the importance of the Al Aqsa Mosque and the Harem al-Sharif to Muslims, and the effect of the Israeli occupation on Muslim religious practices. Later meet with Melkite priest, Father Joseph Saghbini, for an overview of the effect of Zionism on their churches. After lunch visit the Mount of Olives with a guide to understand its religious significance. Enjoy some free time to explore Jerusalem on your own this afternoon. We will be joined for dinner this evening by a Jewish Zionist. Overnight in Jerusalem.

**Sunday, June 17****Jerusalem**

After breakfast visit the Harem al-Sharif (Dome of the Rock) and witness the limits of 'religious freedom' in Israel. Visit the Wailing Wall, one of the holiest Jewish sites, in order to observe the state established religion. Conclude with morning worship in the Old City at Redeemer Lutheran Church or at

St. George's Anglican Church in East Jerusalem. Visit the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, followed by an afternoon meeting with Mr. Yousef Daher regarding the Kairos Palestine Document and process. Dinner and overnight in Jerusalem.

**Monday, June 18****Bethlehem**

Drive to Bethlehem this morning to visit the Church of the Nativity to see the star that marks the birthplace of Christ. Meet with Maher Assaf and tour around the Mosque of Omar. Tour

the old City of Bethlehem. Visit Bethlehem University for a tour and lecture/discussion on the effect the conflict has on the religious practice of Palestinians and on college students' education. Meet with students and have lunch at Bethlehem University. This afternoon visit with Jad Isaac, Director-General of the Applied Research Institute of Jerusalem (or another representative of ARIJ) to discuss "The Economic Impact of the Israeli/Palestinian Conflict on Palestinian Christians, Churches and Denominations." Next, visit Aida Refugee Camp. Tonight's dinner meeting is with Dr. Charlie Abu Sada, Professor of Bethlehem University, to discuss the occupation and its effect on higher education, the church and family life. Overnight in Bethlehem.

**Tuesday, June 19****Hebron**

This morning we visit Ephrata settlement and listen to a settler's story about the effect of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict on the religious practices of those in a settlement. Drive to Hebron to tour the old city and Tomb of the Patriarchs with Christian Peace Makers Team, and hear about the limits of religious freedom in Israeli occupied areas. After lunch meet with the Hebron Rehabilitation Committee. 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 the Hebron Glass Factory that produces colored glass, representing several centuries of Hebron tradition. Return to Bethlehem for dinner at the Grotto with a performance by the Dabkeh Dancing Group. Overnight in Bethlehem.

**Wednesday, June 20****Ramallah**

This morning, drive to Ramallah to meet with Estephan Salameh at his office before stopping at Al Mukata, an important cultural and political center for the Palestinian National Authority. Yaser Arafat's tomb is inside this compound. Meet Christian group leaders such as Ms. Jean Zaru of the Friends and learn

about Christianity in the West Bank. Meet at the historic Quaker Meetinghouse in Ramallah. Depending on time and availability, other possible meetings could include Dr. Mustafa Barghouti, to speak about religion and politics in Palestine and Israel; Dr. Hanna Nasir or Mrs. Tania Nasir at their home in Bier Zeit to discuss the political and economic situation of Palestinians; visit the Edward Said Conservatory to learn how the Israeli domination has impacted the arts of Palestine; Tarek of the Palestine Negotiation Unit to speak on religion and politics in Palestine; or a presentation by representatives of Al Haq regarding human rights in the West Bank. Dinner and overnight in Ramallah.

**Thursday, June 21****Nablus**

Depart early this morning for the Latin Church of Taibeh, with its new Seraj library for Muslim and Christian children. Tour the Palestinian brewery of Taibeh Beer. Meet Samaritan leaders and tour the Samaritan museum on Mt. Gerizim, the Samaritan Israelites' holy place. Continue to Nablus to visit the site believed to be Joseph's Tomb to learn about the politicization of the tomb of a patriarch of Judaism, Samaritanism, Christianity, Islam, and Druze. See the traditional site of Jacob's Well to hear the story of Father Pheloumenos, to learn about the cost of religious faith, and to ask about the role of Christian martyrdom. After lunch meet with Greek Catholic Church pastor, Father Yousef Sa'adeh to understand the state of the church in Nablus and its relationship with Muslims and Samaritans. If time permits, enjoy a walking tour of Old Nablus. Dinner and overnight in Nablus.

**Friday, June 22****Nazareth**

Depart early this morning for the Golan Heights. Visit the Druze village of Majdal Shams and meet with local Druze community leaders to discuss "The Druze of Golan Heights and the Israeli Occupation." Visit the "Valley of the Tears," where the fiercest battles of the Yom Kippur War took place, to discuss recent Syrian refugee attempts to return in June 2011. Drive to Nazareth, the boyhood home of Jesus. Visit the new university in Nazareth: the Nazareth Academic Institute, to learn about its mission, history, and integration into Palestinian higher education. Visit with Sufi Shaykh Abd Salaam Manasra to learn about Sufi Muslim contributions to social harmony. Dinner and overnight in Nazareth.

**Saturday, June 23****Nazareth / Haifa**

After breakfast see the Church of the Annunciation, built on the traditional spot where the angel Gabriel prophesied to Mary, to see the international importance of Nazareth for worldwide Christians. Visit Daliyat el-Carmel, a Druze village with a mosque that was recently renovated in 2008, to discuss with a leader of the Druze community the nature of their relationship in Israel. After lunch visit the Baha'i Gardens of Haifa, surrounding the shining golden dome of the Baha'i Shrine, the world center of the Baha'i religion, for a lecture or discussion with a Baha'i leader. Continue to Haifa for dinner and overnight.

**Sunday, June 24****Haifa / Acre**

This morning drive to Acre (Akko) to see the Bab's memorial, with an introduction to Baha'i by a devotee. Continue to Tel Aviv for a meeting with Zochrot, an Israeli-Jewish organization founded in 2002 to promote awareness of the Palestinian *Nakba*. After dinner in Joppa, spend the night in Tel Aviv.

**Monday, June 25****Return to USA**

Transfer to the airport for an early-morning departure from Tel Aviv, arriving Chicago in the middle of the afternoon.

For further information, contact:

**Dr. Pauline Coffman**  
623 South Euclid Avenue  
Oak Park, IL 60304  
Tel: (708) 524-5444  
Email: p.coffman@sbcglobal.net

**Dr. Paul P. Parker**  
Department of Religious Studies  
Schaible Science Center 009  
Elmhurst College  
Tel: (630) 617-3559  
Email: paulp@elmhurst.edu

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**Tour Price \$4,839 per person, based on sharing a double room**

**Single Room Supplement: \$599**

**Optional Group Travel Insurance: \$297 (nonrefundable)**

*Tour price is based on a total of 16 persons. The price will decrease with additional participants or increase with fewer than 16 participants. Deposits received after March 7, 2012, 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 (currently \$120; subject to change)
- Tips to guides, drivers and hotel staff
- Donations and honoraria to organizations and speakers

**Additional copies of this brochure may be printed from the MTS Travel website at: <http://www.mtstravel.com/tours/pdf/Coffman-Parker-Religious-Diversity-in-Israel-Palestine-June12-25-2012.pdf>**

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



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.

# 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 \$120, 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 \$599. *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.

**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 13, 2012.

**MTS Cancellation Conditions:** Refund of full deposit (less \$100 administrative fee) will be made up to March 7, 2012. If cancellation occurs between March 8 and May 11, 2012, a fee of \$500 plus unrecoverable airline, hotel and tour operator payments will be charged. There is no refund after May 11, 2012, or for unused tour services.

**Protect Your Investment:** MTS TRAVEL strongly recommends purchasing this primary insurance coverage. If you purchase the protection plan within 21 days of your deposit, any restriction on pre-existing conditions is waived. If protection plan is purchased after the 21 days, 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 26, 2012. 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 16 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**

Menno Travel Service, Inc., D/B/AMTS TRAVEL, with its officers and staff act only as agents for the various companies whose accommodations are utilized. They assume no responsibility or liability in connection with the services of any train, vessel, carriage, automobile, airplane or other conveyance, which will be used either wholly or in part. Neither will they be responsible for any act, error, omission, or any injury, loss, accident, or any delays, which may be occasioned by reason of, defect in any vehicle or through neglect or default of any company or persons engaged in the conveying of passengers. The steamer, airplane services or that of any other conveyance, sickness, accident, weather, strikes, war, quarantine or other causes and all such losses or expenses must be borne by the passenger. Prices and schedules appearing in this brochure are based on current schedules and tariff rates and are subject to change without notice. The tour operator reserve the right to modify the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. The airlines and/or other transportation companies concerned are not to be held responsible for any act, omission or event during the time passengers are not aboard their plane or conveyance. The passage contract in use by the airlines concerned, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airlines and purchaser of tours and/or the passenger.

**Reservation Form**  
**Religious Diversity in Israel and Palestine**  
**June 12–25, 2012**  
**with Dr. Pauline Coffman & Dr. Paul Parker**

This tour price reflects special group rates.

Deposits received after March 7, 2012, 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.**

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

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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 \$297 per person with your deposit check. The \$297 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:** \_\_\_\_\_