

The Sixth Annual Interfaith

TREE OF LIFE

Conference on Israel and Palestine

Special Focus:

The New Generation of Peacemakers

SATURDAY & SUNDAY

NOVEMBER 6 & 7, 2010

Location:

First Congregational Church of Old Lyme

Lyme Street and Ferry Road

Old Lyme, Connecticut 06371

860-434-8686 • website: www.fccol.org

This year has seen threats to Middle East peace intensify greatly. It has seen the world stand up and take notice of the United States' involvement in the region. Around the globe, news headlines speak of deadly tensions arising from ideological conflicts, territorial disputes, and competition for scarce natural resources -- often fueled by the intervention of international powers promoting their own interests. Our own country's role as an honest broker of peace is hotly debated here and abroad. So while the focus of this sixth annual Tree of Life Conference, as in preceding conferences, will be on Israel and Palestine, the issues we'll explore have immediate relevance to us all as people of conscience, as U.S. citizens, and as citizens of the world.

SPECIAL FOCUS: A NEW GENERATION OF PEACEMAKERS

Particularly noteworthy this year will be the participation of a new generation of peacemakers -- a number of remarkable young people whose convictions and compassion are exemplary -- very moving parables of hope in our troubled world. Representing a diversity of faith perspectives and nationalities, they are actively engaged in working toward a just and peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, demonstrating what the prophet Jeremiah meant when he said, "Do not say I am only a youth!" Thanks to the courage and the convictions of these youth, someday the Holy Land will be the "light unto the nations" envisioned by the prophet Isaiah.

ROLE OF U.S. FAITH COMMUNITIES

Co-sponsored by Jewish Voice for Peace, Sabeel, the Council on American-Islamic Relations, We Refuse to Be Enemies, and the Tree Of Life Educational Fund, this sixth conference has strong interfaith cooperation. All are concerned with a fundamental question: How can people of faith help make the Holy Land the holy place it could be? Representatives of different faiths will address that question, and consider: 1) the importance of faith traditions' emphasis on justice as essential to peace, 2) the importance of connectivity and solidarity between our communities here and communities in the Holy Land, and 3) the role in political advocacy of faith communities here in the U.S.

THE TREE OF LIFE BRANCHES OUT . . .

The Tree of Life Conference is a major activity of the Tree of Life Educational Fund, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that seeks to amplify the voices of Conference speakers by organizing events at a variety of venues. The year's speakers and performers will also make presentations in Hartford (Hartford Seminary and Asylum Hill Congregational Church), Cape Cod, Philadelphia and New York City. Please consider making a tax-deductible contribution to these efforts. Help the Tree of Life to grow! Use the **Conference Registration Form** to make your gift. Thank you!

CONFERENCE EVENTS

Saturday, November 6 • 5:30 pm

TREE OF LIFE CONCERT

Meetinghouse of the First Congregational Church of Old Lyme

We welcome back to Old Lyme **Martin John Nicholls**, the extraordinary British singer, songwriter and peace campaigner. Martin has traveled extensively with humanitarian organizations in Africa and the Middle East and has composed wonderfully prophetic songs based on what he has seen and heard. In his compositions, he gives voice to the hopes and fears of all those who yearn for “peace on earth, good will to all.” As he says in one of his songs, “I don’t want a faith that takes me deeper into myself...I want a faith that makes a difference!”

The evening will also include comments by **Ann Wright**, a retired U.S. Army colonel and former official with the U.S. State Department, from which she resigned in protest over the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Last May, as a passenger on the *Challenger 1*, which along with the *Mavi Marmara* was part of the Gaza flotilla, Ann was cuffed and taken into custody by the Israeli government. She will describe her experience of that raid and the aftermath.

A Middle Eastern dinner provided by The Islamic Center of New London and the Connecticut Council on American-Islamic Relations will immediately follow the concert. All are welcome at no additional charge.

Admission \$20 -- or \$35 includes both the Saturday concert and the Sunday program. Students and under age 20 free of charge. Reserve now by viewing and printing the Conference Registration Form .

Sunday, November 2 • 1:30 – 6:30 pm

Registration begins at 12:45

VOICES OF CONSCIENCE AND HOPE

Meetinghouse of the First Congregational Church of Old Lyme

First-hand accounts of life in an occupied Palestinian community will be offered by **Najwa and George Saadeh and their daughter, Marian**, residents of Beit Sahour, where Mr. Saadeh is the Principal of the **Shepherd’s Field Greek Orthodox School**. When their daughter Christine, age 9, was fatally shot at an Israeli checkpoint in Bethlehem, this family became members of the **Parents’ Circle**, an organization of bereaved Jewish, Christian and Muslim parents of children killed in the conflict. Also joining us from Beit Sahour, **Jane Hilal** is water and environment unit director of the **Applied Research Institute** in Jerusalem. Jane will describe the work of her organization, which documents the impact of the Separation Wall and water restrictions.

We will hear from **Dr. Taiseer Maray**, a Syrian Druse, who helped establish and directs **Golan for Development**, an organization dedicated to building a democratic modern society in the Golan Heights as a way of resisting the occupation. Dr. Maray will describe the human rights issues of his community, the open mine fields, their limited access to water, as well as the extraordinary medical services his organization provides.

Typifying the spirit of “The New Generation of Peacemakers,” two young Jewish Israeli women, **Maya Wind and Sahar Vardi**, who have been imprisoned for their refusal to serve in the Israeli army (IDF), will report on their experiences and their involvement with **Shiministim**, an organization of youthful conscientious objectors who protest the IDF’s policies of occupation. They will also talk about their work with the **Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions**, advocating on behalf of Palestinians being evicted from their homes in East Jerusalem to make room for Israeli settlements.

We are proud to present **eight young people** who took part in the March, 2010 Tree of Life Journey to Syria, Jordan, Israel and the Occupied Territories of the West Bank and the Golan

Heights: **Dana Colihan, Olivia Mahler-Haug, Allison McCracken, Eliza Nguyen, Mattie Renn, Corey Todd, Isaak Todd, and Micah Todd.** Alli McCracken, who will speak for the group, later returned to the West Bank community of Beit Sahour to learn Arabic, and to further experience the occupation. She has documented her experiences on her blog, www.allimccracken.blogspot.com.

The **Keynote Address** will be offered by the **Rev. Dr. Naim Ateek**, Founder and President/Director of **Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center** in Jerusalem. In 1948, at age 11, he and his family were forced by Zionist troops out of their ancestral home in Beisan, and relocated in Nazareth. An ordained Episcopal priest, and former Canon of the Cathedral Church of St. George the Martyr (Episcopal) in Jerusalem, Rev. Ateek holds degrees from Hardin-Simmons University, the Church Divinity School of the Pacific, and the San Francisco Theological Seminary. He is author and editor of numerous books, including *Justice and Only Justice: A Palestinian Theology of Liberation*, and *A Palestinian Christian Cry for Reconciliation*. In the foreword of *Justice and Only Justice*, Archbishop Desmond Tutu wrote, "Naim Ateek gives voice to hope by calling for a theology and a practice of nonviolent justice and love."

In response to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the human rights issues addressed by conference speakers, shouldn't we as individuals and as faith communities respond? Shouldn't we have something to say? Three remarkable voices of conscience will encourage us.

- **Rebecca Vilkomerson** is Executive Director of **Jewish Voice for Peace**, a national grassroots organization working for a just peace, self-determination and full equality for all people of Palestine and Israel. A graduate of Connecticut College, Rebecca lived in Israel from 2006-09, and now lives in New York City.
- **Mongi Dhaouadi** provides courageous and inspired leadership as Executive Director of the Connecticut chapter of the **Council on American-Islamic Relations**. He is frequently quoted in regional media, presenting an Islamic perspective on issues important to the public. Mongi is a member of the Islamic Center of New London.
- **Mark Braverman**, traveling ambassador for the Tree of Life Educational Fund, is the author of *Fatal Embrace: Christians, Jews and the Search for Peace in the Holy Land*. Being Jewish, Mark speaks out of the great prophetic tradition of Judaism with a critically important message for the Christian churches of America.

Musical interludes will be provided by **Martin John Nicholls**.

All are invited to enjoy refreshments as well as an arts, crafts and information bazaar following the program.

Admission \$20 -- or \$35 includes both this program and the Saturday evening concert. Students and under age 20 free of charge. Reserve now by viewing and printing the Conference Registration Form .

DIRECTIONS TO THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF OLD LYME

From the west and I-95N: Take Exit 70. Turn right onto Rt. 156 and continue to the blinking light at Ferry Road. Turn left and continue to the corner of Lyme Street. The church is on the right. From the east and I-95S: Turn left off Exit 70 and continue on Lyme Street to the corner of Ferry Road. The church will be on your right.

More information:

The First Congregational Church of Old Lyme, 2 Ferry Road, Old Lyme, CT 06371
860-434-8686 email: fccol@snet.net • website: www.fccol.org

RETURN TO THE HOMEPAGE AND CLICK ON "REGISTRATION FORM" TO VIEW AND PRINT THE FORM. THANK YOU!