

August 10, 2006: An update from Northern Israel

It is not easy being an Arab Christian in Israel, as a minority within a minority. The Association of Baptist Churches in Israel (ABC) is a community of 3000 people - most of them Arabs - ministering in the northern part of Israel. The Association was established in 1956 with 3 churches only and consists of 20 churches today. - A living testimony in the land where the Word became Flesh and dwelt among us.

Hopes were high for this summer in ABC churches. After few years of political unrest, it was time for relief. For many years, almost nobody would visit the area and the local body of Christ would feel even more isolated. This summer was supposed to be special with lots of visitors coming. A praise team from Canada was scheduled to speak at the conference of Rama Maranatha Baptist Church, a group from England was planned to arrive into Cana of Galilee for helping with the Vacation Bible School, and another group of young adults was coming all the way from San Diego to help with the summer camp in Nazareth.



Aug 10: Missile hits the Arab Village of Deir Al-Assad in Northern Israel – killing a mother and her 5 years old son.

Since war erupted between Israel and Lebanon in Mid-July, all these programs were cancelled, and churches have been focusing on healing the wounded souls. After almost a month of war between Israel and Lebanon, the people of Galilee are exhausted. More than 3,000 missiles have been fired at almost every city and town in Northern Israel. 38 civilians were killed - 17 of them who are Arab.

Since the beginning of the fighting, many people fled their homes to safer locations in central Israel, staying in hotels or with relatives and friends. Many Arab citizens found refuge in Arab cities in lower Galilee, mostly Nazareth - which is supposed to be safer. Nazareth nowadays is the biggest Arab city in Israel with around 70,000 residents - one third of who are Christians. But even Nazareth was hit with missiles and two little kids were killed. A much bigger disaster was saved when a second missile fell 10 yards away from a gas station in the middle of the crowded downtown area.

The people in Northern Israel have suffered badly in this war. People who do not have the means were stuck in their homes, many times spending most of their time in shelters, or running to the shelter numerous times every day, whenever the siren would go on.

The Israeli government has passed some emergency laws to compensate individuals and businesses, but the nature of war is that lots of people are left behind. Within churches in our Association, there are people who are in great difficulties because they lost their jobs.

In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:37-39).

Prayer Requests:

1. For **leaders of Israel and Lebanon**, that they will have courage to stop the war and lead their nations into a better future.
2. **For leaders of the USA and France**, and other leaders of the world to help in reaching a cease fire – that the voice of the peacemakers will be heard more clearly.
3. For all the people that are suffering in **Lebanon**: The ones that lost dear ones, the ones that were injured and for the ones that lost their homes.
4. For all the people that are suffering in **Israel**: Jewish, Moslem and Christian families that lost dear ones and for people who were injured.
5. For the people that are suffering in **Gaza**. More than 100 people were killed in Gaza since the beginning of the war in Lebanon.
6. For **BBS, ABTS and LSESD** and all other Baptist ministries in Lebanon that are reaching out to all peoples of Lebanon with a message of compassion and love.
7. For **pastors** of the Baptist churches in Israel so they can encourage their churches and for opportunities being opened for reaching out with the good news during this time.
8. For the **children** in our churches as many live in constant fear - that they will grow and enjoy their childhood in a world with less hatred.
9. For all **mission agencies and individuals** from all around the world that are helping and assisting in mercy work in Israel and Lebanon.
10. For the body of Christ as a whole in Israel: **Christian Arabs and Messianic Jews**: to be united and present Christ in the midst of all the suffering

If you feel called to help in any way with the needs of the people of Northern Israel, through the ministry of the Association of Baptist Churches in Israel, please do not hesitate in contacting me.

In Christ,

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