Abraham’s Children in Contemporary Israel and Palestine

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

Co-Leaders: Dr. Pauline Coffman and Dr. Paul Parker

June 15-29, 2013

**Dr. Pauline Coffman** has experience leading seminars to Lebanon, Syria, 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** is the chairperson and a professor in the Department of Religious Studies at Elmhurst College where he teaches Christian Social Ethics, World Religions, and Religion in America. He has experience leading student courses in India, Turkey, Jordan and Israel/Palestine. Both are pleased to serve as volunteer tour leaders.

The tour is designed to allow Israeli Jews to tell their stories and then to follow the Jewish narratives with Christian and Muslim Palestinians’ experiences, and finally the Samaritans, Druze, and Baha’i. We will explore how the devotees of the diverse religions of Israel and Palestine live together in a land where ethnic and religious differences are imposed on everyone.

**Itinerary**

**June 15:** Depart the United States for Tel Aviv on Saturday. Tour participants will make their own flight arrangements so that everyone arrives on Sunday afternoon.

**June 16: Jerusalem**—Arrive at Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv on Sunday afternoon. Group transportation to Jerusalem will be provided and a brief guided walking tour of the Old City of Jerusalem to stretch one’s legs.

**June 17 – 20: Jerusalem**—Visit Israel’s Holocaust museum, Yad Vashem; meet with representatives of Rabbis for Human Rights (RHR), the Israeli Committee Against Home Demolitions (ICAHD), and a Jewish member of the Knesset. Climb legendary Masada and swim in the Dead Sea. Then, begin to learn the story of Palestinian Christians through Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center.

**June 21 – 22: Bethlehem**—Explore the Old City of Jerusalem (the Western Wall, Al Aqsa Mosque, the Dome of the Rock, Via Dolorosa, and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher); meet with Muslim scholars; and discuss the ecumenical Kairos Palestine document with Christian leaders before departing for Bethlehem.

In Bethlehem explore the contemporary meaning of the birthplace of Jesus (Church of the Nativity) and listen to the Imam of the Mosque of Omar. Tour Bethlehem University; meet Dr. Mazin Qumsiyeh, a Christian professor of biology and leading human rights activist; and learn from the Applied Research Institute of Jerusalem about the daily lives of Palestinians.

Take a day trip from Bethlehem to Hebron to meet with the Hebron Rehabilitation Committee and the Christian Peacemaker Teams to see first hand the effect of Jewish settlers on the lives of Palestinians. Visit the Tomb of the Patriarchs (Abraham and Sarah; Isaac and Rebecca, and Jacob and Leah) to experience the limits of religious freedom. Walk through the market of the Old City, visit the internationally renowned Hebron Glass Factory, and return to the Grotto in Beit Sahour for dinner and a performance of Debkah dancing.

**June 23 - 24: Ramallah**—Attend church with Palestinian Christians of Bethlehem; visit Aida Refugee Camp’s Alrowwad Cultural and Theater Center. Meet the Melkite Christian, Dr. Charlie Abu Saada, to learn about the experience of Christians across Israel and Palestine as a minority religious group. Depart Bethlehem for Ramallah with free time for individual reflection and exploration.
Visit Al Mukata, the nationally important and still controversial memorial for Yasser Arafat. Meet Christian Palestinian officials in the Palestinian Authority.

**June 25: Nablus**—Depart Ramallah for Taybeh to visit the Latin Church of Taybeh where The Seraj Library Project (a U.S.-based Christian NGO) has helped build a library for the children of Taybeh, both Muslims and Christians. Tour the Taybeh Beer Brewery, the first brewery in Palestine. Continue to historic Nablus to visit the religiously important and politically contentious site of Joseph’s Tomb and Jacob’s Well. Discuss the religious differences between Jewish Israelites and Samaritan Israelites with a Samaritan priest at the Samaritan Museum.

**June 26: Nazareth**—Depart Nablus for the Golan Heights to meet religious Druze leaders. Visit the now famous “Valley of tears. Dine on St. Peter’s Fish for lunch at the Sea of Galilee en route to Nazareth. Visit with Sufi Shaykh and Professor Ghassen Manasra to learn about the Sufi contribution to peace in the Middle East.

**June 27: Haifa**—After visiting Nazareth’s Church of the Annunciation with its the wildly different and elegant intercultural renderings of “the Holy Family” depart for Haifa. Visit the world-famous Bahá’í Gardens and learn about the beginnings of the newest “world religion” to call Israel its home. Learn about Adalah, an independent Palestinian human rights organization. And on the way, we will learn how the Druze of Galilee differ from the Druze of Golan.

**June 28: Tel Aviv**—Depart Haifa for Tel Aviv on Friday morning to meet with Zochrot, a Jewish human rights organization whose mission is to educate Israeli Jews about the Palestinian Nakba. The afternoon is free for packing, reflecting, or swimming in the Mediterranean Sea—and the concluding Farewell Dinner.

**June 29:** Very early morning departure for Ben Gurion International Airport. Arrive in the U.S. the Saturday afternoon, June 29.

**TOUR FEATURES AND CONDITIONS**

**Tour price:** $2,500 per person, based on sharing a double room.

**Single room supplement:** $520

Tour price is based on a total of 15 participants. The price will decrease with additional participants or increase with fewer. Deposits received after March 11, 2013 will likely incur additional charges due to supplier contract terms.

Tour price includes:

- Accommodations in tourist class inns and hotels with private facilities
- Breakfast and either lunch or dinner
- Services of experienced, English-speaking, licensed guides
- Sightseeing and entrance fees; service charges and local taxes
- Donations and honoraria to organizations and speakers

Tour price does not include:

- Airline tickets
- Tips to hotel staff (porters, waiters, custodial staff), bus driver, and guide.
- One meal per day.
- Passport fee, travel insurance, and personal expenses.

**Notes**

- **Cancellation options:** Refund of full deposit (less $100 administrative fee) will be made up to March 11, 2013. If cancellation occurs between March 11 and May 10, 2013, a fee of $500 plus unrecoverable tour operation payments will be charged. There is no refund after May 10, 2013, or for unused tour services.
• **Plane tickets:** Individuals should make their own round trip flight arrangement either directly or through a travel agent. Please arrive by midday or early afternoon on June 16. The tour ends and departure should be scheduled after the Farewell Dinner on June 28.

• **Passports:** The expiration date of all passports must be at least six months after the end of the tour (December 29, 2013) or you will not be permitted to enter Israel. If you do not have a valid passport, please apply immediately. Visas are issued upon arrival in Israel.

• **Daily personal funds:** Individual shopping, one meal each day, and tips for the bus driver and guide at the conclusion of the trip, and daily tips for the hotel staff.

• **Travel insurance:** Do you need travel insurance? Some individuals choose to protect themselves with a special insurance plan that can cover the cost of lost baggage, medical emergencies, and trip cancelations and interruptions. MH Ross is one such company that provides a wide spectrum of travel insurance options. Their Asset Plus plan seems especially well suited for international trips, but they have many products which you may want to examine. One common feature for all of their plans is that you must purchase a plan within 15 days of your initial trip deposit. You may contact them at www.mhross.com and 800-423-3632.

• **Deposits and final payment deadlines:** Deposits of $500 are due by March 11, 2013. Make the check out to: “Middle East Traveling Seminar” and mail to: Pauline Coffman, 623 South Euclid Avenue, Oak Park, IL 60304. The remainder of the tour fee will be billed and final payment is due no later than May 11, 2013. Sorry, we cannot accept credit cards.

• **Accommodations:** Hotels and/or hospices are tourist class hotels with private facilities.

“Abraham’s Children in Contemporary Israel and Palestine” is co-sponsored by the Siraj Center for Holy Land Studies (Palestine) and the Middle East Task Force of Chicago Presbytery (PCUSA)

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 by Western mainstream media, by organizing interaction with local Palestinian families.

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 mission” 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.”

For further information, contact:

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Reservation Form

Abraham’s Children in Contemporary Israel and Palestine

June 15 – 29, 2013

With Dr. Pauline Coffman & Dr. Paul Parker

This tour price reflects special group rates.

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To be assured of reservations, please complete this Registration Form, attach to it a personal check for $500 (payable to the Middle East Traveling Seminar), and mail both to Pauline Coffman, 623 South Euclid Avenue, Oak Park, IL 60304. (Credit cards are not accepted.) Registration with group rates is due by March 11, 2013.

Enclosed is my deposit check of $_________. (Final payment is due by May 11, 2013). (Please Print)

Name (as it appears on passport): ________________________________________________________________

Name as you wish for it to appear on your tour name badge: __________________________________________

Street address: _____________________________________________________________

City, State, ZIP ________________________________________________________________

Phone: (evening) _____________________ (days) ___________________ FAX: _______________________

E-mail: ________________________________________________________________

Birthdate: ________________________________

Room Type: ____ Twin/Double _____ Single ($520 additional fee) Rooming with: ________________________________

Passport Copies: Please provide a clear photocopy of the photo and signature pages of your passport.

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

Signature: ____________________________________________________________________________

Responsibility: Siraj Center for Holy Land Studies and the Middle East Task Force of Chicago Presbytery with its officers, staff, and volunteers 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. 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 reserves the right to modify the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules.