



MORAVIAN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

HOME AND OVERSEAS

FEBRUARY 2024

World Day of Prayer service on Friday March 1st 2024
Written by the Christian women of Palestine

This year's service takes its theme from Paul's letter to the Ephesians 4:2 "I beg you, bear with one another in love".

The Middle East has, in modern times, been an area of division and confrontation sometimes as a result of European interference when Empires were seeking to enrich themselves with mineral wealth as the Industrial Revolution advanced. T.E. Lawrence and Gertrude Bell were asked to negotiate with Middle Eastern tribes after the First World War. Their recommendations were for independent Arab states but the British and French Governments of the time drew in country boundaries and divided up the spoils between themselves wanting to completely destroy the Ottoman Empire after the First World War. They did not take into account the nomadic nature of tribal life nor how these tribes chose to rule themselves. In 1917 a letter, which became known as The Balfour Declaration, was sent from Lord Arthur James Balfour (the British Foreign Secretary) to Lionel Walter Rothschild (a leader of the Anglo-Jewish community). It declared the British consent for a national home for the Jews in Palestine, also clearly stating that the rights of non-Jewish communities in Palestine should be respected.

Support for the creation of a homeland for the Jews in Palestine increased after the end of World War II, largely because of the Holocaust. The United Nations adopted the Partition Plan of 1947 when Britain announced its withdrawal from Palestine. The UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 181 which then called for the creation of two independent states (Palestine and Israel) with special international status for the city of Jerusalem.

After 1948 tensions between Israel and its neighbours escalated and, in June 1967, a pre-emptive attack, launched by Israel, resulted in the Six-Day War. Israeli Military seized the Sinai and the Golan Heights as well as occupied East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza. Palestinians call this war the Naksa, or the "setback." Since that time there has been a gradual erosion of Palestinian land by Israeli settler groups (recognised as illegal by the international judiciary). Currently no sovereign Palestinian state exists.

The Palestinian flag has flown outside the United Nations building in New York since 2015 and as of July 2019, 138 of the 193 United Nations member states have recognised Palestine as a state. (Usually I would include a picture of the flag of the writing country but, because of its political affiliation with the terrorist group Hamas, I have not done so in this article.)

It is estimated that there are over 5 million Palestinians living in Palestine and Israel. 2% of these Palestinians are Christian among a majority of Palestinian Muslims.

This year's World Day of Prayer service has been written by women from this minority group of Palestinians. Since the October 7th invasion of Israeli territory, abduction and slaughter of Israelis by Hamas and the subsequent violent Israeli retaliation in Gaza it has not been possible to discover the whereabouts or wellbeing of these women. Carole Bourne, our WDP President, has tried to contact Sally Azar, the first female Lutheran pastor and member of the writing group, but has had no success. No one from the WDP International Committee has had any contact either.

The Palestinian Christian women were invited to write the service in 2017 and so the stories they tell reflect life in Palestine as it was then. Things will, no doubt, be very

different now. The Bible text of bearing with one another in love will be a very hard one to live up to if/when the bombing of Gaza stops and the rebuilding of the Palestinian state begins. People on both sides of the Gazan war will need our prayers if, as the international community agrees, a two state solution is to be found where both sides can live in peace with each other.

On the WDP domestic front the National Committee has continued to meet every two months at the International Salvation Army HQ at Blackfriars. Our Link Day, in July, was held at St Andrew's Southwark and, although more Preparation Day Leaders were able to attend, we are still not back to pre-Covid numbers. At our Residential, this year held at the Wydale Centre near Scarborough, we began preparations for the 2025 service which has been written by the Christian women of the Cook Islands.

As before, I would encourage you to find a service near you where you may find inspiration and strength from the stories told and the prayers given. If you have a calling to assist in the World Day of Prayer movement then please consider becoming a Branch Secretary, a Preparation Day Leader or offer to take on some other role. Please remember the Y-Pray? meeting which, this year, will be held on Zoom on the May Day weekend. For further information please look at the WDP website (wwdp.org.uk).

Maureen Colbert

God of peace, come among us
Rain down your peace on the world.
Make a path for your goodness
Fill every heart with your peace.

Yarabba ssalami
Amter alayna ssalam
Yarabba ssalami
Imla' qulubana ssalam.

Traditional Palestinian Song