

ADVANCING HUMANITY IN ISRAEL

Learning Community

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A REGION OF FAITHS

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The land historically known as Palestine, Aeolia Capitolina, and Israel has a rich and complex history of occupation, war, intrigue, and religious fervor. It has also played a pivotal role as a symbolic center for the political and spiritual aspirations of Jews, Christians, and Muslims. The conflict that currently rages there is viewed by many on all sides as a harbinger of the wider conflict in the region, as well as offering a possibility for potential peace and a stabilizing force within the entire Middle East. The McMaster Israel Learning Community spent the 2006-2007 academic year studying historical, political, economic, geographical, cultural, and religious issues that face the people of Israel and Palestine.

The McMaster Israel Learning Community partnered with those who are attempting to offer nonviolent, proactive, religion-based, and interfaith solutions to the complex issues that the people of this region face. There were two geographic areas of focus: in the north, the small village of Ibillin, where we worked with Mar Elias Educational Institutions, and in the south, where we worked with the Lutheran ministries in Jerusalem.

When anyone--clergy and laypeople, men and women, children and adults--at either of these ministries was asked, "How can we be of assistance to you? What can we do to help?", first and foremost--beyond financial support or any material assistance--responses emphasized the importance of telling their stories. Our projects involved much more--research, consultation, education, providing resources, publishing, and working closely with leaders as well as children--but the most important thing we will do is to tell the stories of these ministries in these pages.

