



Acer Farm, Brattleboro, Vermont

Jerusalem Peacebuilders: A Shared Vision for Humanity

By Maurice L. Harris | Photos provided by Jerusalem Peacebuilders

A typical day at Jerusalem Peacebuilders (JPB) starts early and ends late. Like many experiential camps, JPB's Leadership Institute has designated times for meals, work, play, prayer, and rest, but it's how the experience is structured that makes it so unique and, by all accounts, so uniquely effective.

The Rev. Canon Nicholas Porter, executive director, explains, "We host our facilitated dialogs in the evenings, after the meals, guest speakers, learning, and sports. That's when the students are most tired."



The Rev. Canon Nicholas Porter
Executive Director | Jerusalem Peacebuilders

Watch the exclusive interview! <https://vimeo.com/206143625>

Conversations about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, military occupation, and interfaith citizenship are regular bed-time banter for the youth participants. And there is good reason for this. It's easier to engage differences when you have the energy to tolerate them. However, when the mind and body are weary, "that's when the "nice-nice mask comes off," Porter explains.

Under the guidance of professional facilitators, those intense discussions reveal a shared humanity.

Porter says, "We recognize that we all share the same fears, the same dreams, the same joys, the same hurts. Once we've accepted each other's humanity, we can begin working toward a shared vision for humanity."

Once we've accepted each other's humanity, we can begin working toward a shared vision for humanity.

Porter and his wife, Dorothy, founded JPB at her family's southern Vermont Farm in 2011. The timing was in response, in large part, to anti-Muslim sentiment on the 10th anniversary of the September 11 attacks. JPB today has programs in Texas, Connecticut and Jerusalem, but

the original Acer Farm location—just west of Brattleboro—is a special place for more than 150 individuals whose lives have been changed there.

This is a landmark year for JPB with three summer camps on the schedule. The JPB team has been sifting through a record number of applications from Israel, Jerusalem, New England, and Texas. Although spaces are filling quickly, members and friends of The Episcopal Church in Vermont are encouraged to apply.

The 2017 Youth Leadership Institute is designed for youth 17-18 years of age. The program will take place from July 16 to 30 at Acer Farm, and the cost is \$1,200 per participant. Adult volunteers are also welcome.

JPB has been developing its adult education programs, too. Adult programs are geared toward individuals already involved in peacebuilding work. These "training of trainers" sessions empower experienced peacebuilders to review, refresh, and reinforce their knowledge.

"It's also about building lifelong relationships," Porter says. "For adults and youth alike, peacebuilding can be lonely work because it's countercultural."

With a little hope—and a lot of courage—JPB is helping to make interfaith connections the new normal.

To participate in or volunteer for Youth Leadership Institute, please visit <http://jerusalempeacebuilders.org>



Canoe trip to foster camaraderie



Students enjoying kosher and halal meals