

PARTICIPATING IN GOD'S MISSION

CRUX

EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN CONNECTICUT

INSIDE

JOINING JESUS IN
THE NEW MISSIONAL AGE

SEEKING GOD
IN ALL PEOPLE

LOVING THOSE
ON THE MARGINS

FOLLOWING JESUS
ONTO THE ISLAND
OF HISPANIOLA

PERFIL DE LA
REVERENDA LOYDA
E. MORALES



I am a young person of faith.

Karin Hamilton

Aroub Jaber, Eli Lasman, and Nadira Baransy were in Connecticut this summer as part of the annual Service-Learning Institute of Jerusalem Peacebuilders (JPB). The three high school students, each age 15, are all citizens of Israel; two are Palestinian.

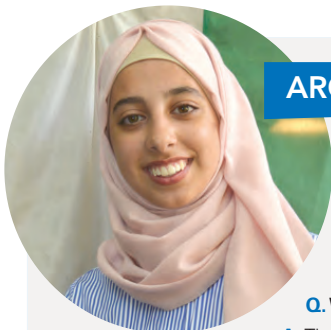
The interfaith program was held August 4-14 at Christ Church, New Haven and included volunteering at local agencies as well as pre-arranged tours and meetings in New York City and elsewhere. On August 8 the group joined the "Interfaith Service Day" in New Haven, organized by IWagePeace, a JPB partner. It provided multiple opportunities for the community to volunteer on projects alongside the JPB teens.

As described on its website, jerusalempeacebuilders.org, JPB is "an interfaith, non-profit organization with a mission to create a better future for humanity across religions, cultures, and nationalities. Integral to that mission is the belief that the future of Jerusalem is the future of the world. To that end, JPB promotes transformational, person-to-person encounters among the peoples of Jerusalem, the United States, and the Holy Land.

"JPB's interfaith programs focus on uniting Israelis, Palestinians, and Americans and providing them with the opportunities, relationships, and skills they need to become future leaders for peace in the global community. A passion for peace drives our mission and partnerships power our program."

The Rev. Nicholas Porter, founder and executive director of JPB, and former rector of Trinity, Southport, also leads programs and was in New Haven with the teens and other JPB staff and volunteers.

"The exciting thing about the young Israeli, Palestinian, and American teens that came to New Haven for the service learning program," he said, "is that they were here to grow personally; to grow as leaders; to be agents of change at home for peace and acceptance and a shared society. But they were also here in their own humble way to act as a catalyst or leaven for the religious communities here in New Haven. "Someone asked me recently, why now? Because now is the time. It's the time in the Middle East for change. But it's also time here in the United States as there are so many uncertainties we face. We're becoming a multi religious, multicultural democracy and we're proving ourselves not to be so adept at that. And these young people have things to teach us."



AROUB JABER

Aroub Jaber is Muslim and lives in Umm el-Fahem with her family: father, mother, one older sister and one younger sister, and one older brother. She attends the Orthodox Arab College-School in Haifa. Her hobbies include playing the piano, listening to music, playing soccer, and swimming.

Q. Did you grow up in your faith and tradition? Did you have to make a decision?

A. Yes. My parents advised me and led me and told me what to do to benefit me. I chose myself but of course I listened.

Q. What does it mean in practical terms to be Muslim?

A. There are certain rules, for example, to pray five times a day, fast in Ramadan, and for girls, to wear the hijab. Our religion really wants peace. I am grateful and thankful for being Muslim.

Q. Can you share an example of a situation you were in where your faith guided your action?

A. Every day I want God to be with me. This is my second year here with JPB. A lot has changed and I was really worried and concerned, but now, I'm not worried because God is beside me.

Q. What do you appreciate most about being Muslim?

A. Many things! I am happy to be Muslim. Islam means a lot to me. Our religion says we must help poor people, to give them food; to give them a place to live; to help people as much as you can.

Q. Before you were part of JPB, did you have friends who were of other faiths?

A. Yes. My elementary school was mixed, Muslim and Christian, so I know many things about Christianity and have many Christian friends. I have a few Jewish friends and really hope that I can get to know more Jewish people.

Q. Why did you want to get involved in this interfaith organization Jerusalem Peacebuilders?

A. I want to get to know new people, new cultures, new religions. And get more information about the religions. Also, in Palestine, we have a conflict. I want to participate in this program to know cultures, and build bridges between two cultures, Jewish and Arab, that will hopefully lead to peace, I know JPB talks about peace. That's what we need back home, peace: to live in peace.

Photos: Marc-Yves Regis



NADIRA BARANSY

Nadira Baransy is Christian and lives in the village of Reineh with her family: father, mother, and two younger brothers. She attends the Almotran School in Nazareth and has declared majors in physics and electronics. Her hobbies include playing the piano and reading, and she reads in both Arabic and English.

Q. Did you grow up in your faith and tradition? Did you have to make a decision?

A. I grew up in it.

Q. What does it mean in practical terms to be Christian?

A. All the religions want us to live in peace with love. Not to hate any person; we have to love each other.

Q. Can you share an example of a situation you were in where your faith guided your action?

A. I ask my mother, who is like my best friend. When I have any problem, I pray for God to be with me in the problem.

Q. What do you appreciate most about being Christian?

A. I appreciate that Christianity tells us not to hate anyone because of their religion. We are all human. And also, to love our enemies. They want us to live in peace, without violence.

Q. Before you were part of JPB, did you have friends who were of other faiths?

A. Yes of course. In our school are Muslims and Christians. Most of my friends are Muslim. The religion of my friends doesn't matter. What's important is how he or she treats me.

Q. Why did you want to get involved in this interfaith organization Jerusalem Peacebuilders?

A. In our school, there are only Christian and Muslim students. So I didn't meet lot of Jews, and thought JPB would give me the opportunity to meet Jews — and also Americans — because I would like to learn others' opinions about the conflict, and to hear what they think. Also so I can also meet people my age with different backgrounds and religions because I like to make different friends.



ELI LASMAN

Eli Lasman is Jewish and lives in Netanya with his family: father, mother, and older sister who's in the army. He attends Sharet High School in Netanya and has declared majors in diplomacy and Arabic. His hobbies include reading and he enjoys history, geography, and politics.

Q. Did you grow up in your faith and tradition? Did you have to make a decision?

A. I am Orthodox Jewish, secular, and a bit traditional. Yes, I grew up in it. I always thought about the religion, and think this is the best for me.

Q. What does it mean in practical terms to be Jewish?

A. It depends on your secularity. For me, it means To eat Kosher, to pray at times, to accept the important rules, to ask and know and learn more about the religion.

Q. Can you share an example of a situation you were in where your faith guided your action?

A. Today, we were at an activity, and afterwards they gave us pizza, some with meat and some without meat. The pizza with meat looked good but I chose without meat, because my religion says we should not eat meat with dairy products. My faith guides me in a lot of actions. There are a lot of rules — it's a very ancient religion.

Q. What do you appreciate most about being Jewish?

A. Mostly I appreciate the rules. They are mostly about forgiveness or justice or they are ethical rules to do what God wants. Because I believe in those values, it helps me to live them.

Q. Before you were part of JPB, did you have friends who were of other faiths?

A. I knew some, but they weren't really friends. I only talked with them from time to time. In JPB I really met friends, like Aroub for example, and new people from different religions. It is so nice to know people from other religions; and they're so nice, from a human perspective.

Q. Why did you want to get involved in this interfaith organization Jerusalem Peacebuilders?

A. I wanted to develop myself and learn more about the conflict and meet new friends.