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## Bethlehem Partnership Update

by Bonnie Van Overbeke

The Bethlehem Partnership Working Group, organized in spring 2014, seeks ways to share information with churches in the Wisconsin Conference about the work of our partner church, Christmas Lutheran Church in Bethlehem, and about the struggles and hopes of Palestinian and Israelis who are working for justice and peace. We have spoken at several churches in our Associations, written articles for the Conference and Association newsletters, and sponsored a trip to Israel/Palestine in spring 2015. As part of our continuing effort to increase awareness of our partnership and in response to the national UCC World Ministries Board Middle East Initiative, we invite you to consider the following ways to learn about the partnership.

1. Invite a member of the Working Group to come to your church to preach or speak to an adult education class about the Partnership and the work of Christmas Lutheran Church. A short video is available.
2. Sign up on the Bethlehem Partnership Facebook page or visit [Brightstarsbethlehem.org](http://Brightstarsbethlehem.org), our U.S. ecumenical affiliate.
3. Follow news about the UCC Middle East Initiative by going to [www.ucc.org](http://www.ucc.org) and search "Middle East Initiative"
4. Study the Kairos document, the call of our Christian brothers and sisters for our prayers and support, in an adult education class.
5. Plan a book study of *Faith in the Face of Empire* by Mitri Raheb, pastor of Christmas Lutheran Church. We can provide discussion questions or a member of the Working group to be a facilitator for your study.
6. Use the *Bethlehem Advent Devotional*, written by members of Bright Stars of Bethlehem who have traveled to Israel/Palestine. To order copies, go to Creative Publications ([www.creativecommunications.com](http://www.creativecommunications.com)).
7. Read and study the General Synod resolution to Work for a Just Peace in Israel Palestine that includes a call to boycott, divest from, and sanction companies that profit from human rights violations arising from the occupation of Palestinian Territories by the state of Israel.
8. Consider joining a Bethlehem Partnership trip to the Holy Land. (For information about upcoming trips, contact Bonnie Van Overbeke or Nancy Baumgardner, trip leaders.)

For more information about these activities, contact any of the members of the Working Group.

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