

## Bethlehem Partnership News

In July the local Bright Stars of Bethlehem chapter brought our partner Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb to Madison where he spoke at several venues around the city. At First Unitarian Society, Mitri talked about hope in the shadow of the barrier wall that surrounds Bethlehem making the “little town” even littler. And throughout the West Bank there is a network of Israeli settlements and a system of Israeli only roads that connect these settlements to Israel proper, taking land and precious resources away from the Palestinians. This matrix of settlements and roads cuts farmers off from their fields and Palestinians from their family and friends in “neighboring” towns. One could easily feel hopeless living in these isolated enclaves but the work of our partners in Bethlehem give hope not only to the Palestinian but to those of us who have the opportunity to hear and see what God is doing today in the land where our savior was born.

At an event at Christ the Solid Rock Church, Rev. Everett Mitchell and Mitri shared the stage and talked about the intersectionality of life and its struggles as Palestinian Christians and African Americans, both marginalized people living in a world that sees them as second class citizens. They talked about how their ways of interpreting God’s word and will help their people not only survive systems of oppression but thrive as people who deserve the life abundant Jesus came to proclaim. And they look forward to working together as allies in their common struggle for justice and equality.

If you would like to listen to these presentations, go to [www.brightstarsofbethlehem.org](http://www.brightstarsofbethlehem.org)

The hope we have as people of faith is not a hope that yearns for a better life and a fairer world, it is a hope that works for a better life and a fairer world for all God’s people. Our UCC Bethlehem Partnership invites you to join us in this work. Here are some ways to do this:

- Read Rev. Mitri’s book *Faith in the Face of Empire* or *The Cross in Context* . Invite others in your congregation to join you and use study materials available from Bright Stars of Bethlehem.
- Invite someone from our Conference-wide Bethlehem Partnership to come to your church. We can talk about the Partnership, show a video of the college in Bethlehem that we support, or speak about the struggles our partners are facing.
- Travel to see for yourself what God is doing in Bethlehem. In the fall of 2019 our Bethlehem Partnership is offering a trip to Bethlehem and beyond. We call our trip a “pilgrimage, an opportunity to experience the cultural, religious and historical landscape” we call the “Holy Land.” [View tour flyer](#)

For more information about our partnership or the 2019 trip, contact Bonnie Van Overbeke, chair ([bonnievano@aol.com](mailto:bonnievano@aol.com))