

Let us give thanks to you, LORD, for your steadfast love
and your wonderful works for all people.
Let us exalt you in the assembly of the people;
in the council of the elders, let us sing hallelujah!

Psalm 107:31-32

Gatherings

In the last few weeks, I have been involved in, or benefited from, multiple educational events in our church life. These activities provided opportunities to understand different aspects of life in the Presbyterian Church (USA), from training for new presbytery leaders to preparation for the upcoming General Assembly to local and global gatherings of people trying to comprehend the tragic conflict in Israel and Palestine. Thanks to technology, recordings of the two events focusing on Israel and Palestine are available for viewing.

A little over a week ago, I returned from a weeklong training for new presbytery executives in Nebraska, and then I participated in the Synod's training for General Assembly commissioners. And last week we were able to make available the video recording from the ["God's Word in God's Land"](#) event in March. This event was comprised of three sections:

- a talk from Dr. Dennis Okholm, who discussed the relationship between the growing popularity of dispensationalist eschatology (that's quite a seminary mouthful) and unwavering support for the modern nation of Israel, even in the face of thousands of civilian deaths in Gaza
- a talk from Dr. Tommy Givens, who discussed the many ways the Bible references "Israel"
- a Q&A session moderated by Dr. Marianne Meye Thompson.

The session was very insightful as we consider the very complicated ethical concerns posed by the war in Gaza, and I highly commend it. It is a three-hour session, but you can always pause or fast-forward through the day—click [HERE](#) to view it. Thanks to the Education, Equipping, and Empowerment Committee for organizing this. You can also find the link under the "Presbytery Resources" section of the Monday Morning Update.

Another event that took a different approach to the conflicts in Israel and Palestine was the 2024 Joint Israeli-Palestinian Memorial Day Ceremony, which was held on May 12th. This was the 19th year of the event, organized by Combatants for Peace and the group I have great respect for, the [Israeli-Palestinian Bereaved Families Forum](#). This event combines messages from children, musicians, and family members who have lost loved ones in the current war as well as the decades of conflict in God's chosen land. It is humbling to hear from people who have chosen to respond to their immense grief with their commitment to peace. A recording of the ceremony, along with many other resources, can be found through the group's American affiliate, <https://parentsirclefriends.org/>.

We have a few gatherings coming up. This Wednesday, Kristin Leucht is hosting a lunch meeting at the Presbytery Center to go over the changes to the Board of Pensions benefits program. Email Kristin at kleucht@pensions.org if you want to attend or want to consult with her about a particular situation.

On June 8, Shepherd of the Valley Presbyterian Church will be holding their annual International Festival. At 11 am, they will open with food and crafts, and at 12:30 pm there will be a music program. This is a joyous beloved event that is coming back to life post-COVID. Shepherd of the Valley recently hosted the 50th Anniversary celebration of the National Taiwanese Presbyterian Council, led by Rev. Yank Lee, Shepherd of the Valley's co-pastor and the moderator of the NTPC. The second-largest Asian membership within the PC(USA), after Korean, is Taiwanese.

And on June 15, we are holding our next stated Presbytery meeting and Day of Service. As usual, the June Presbytery meeting will be very short, starting at 9 am, and we hope the Day of Service begins at 10 am. The meeting will be held at Trinity Presbyterian Church near Sierra Madre. Among the service options will be our first work day at the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy, the first plot of land returned to the first people of Los Angeles. We will meet at Trinity first, as the address of the landback is not public. There are restrictions on the work conditions at the Conservancy, and space is limited, so please be sure to register [HERE](#) if you want to participate.

We have many opportunities to gather as the Presbytery of San Gabriel and friends. We gather to learn, to share, to worship, to mourn, to discuss, to deliberate, to celebrate, and to work. In all that we do, we do to the glory of God, in service to Jesus Christ, and in the gathering power of the Holy Spirit. I invite you to participate as you are available and led.

Thanks be to God!

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