

Friends of Sabeel Australia Incorporated

Annual General Meeting 2006

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

It is my privilege to present this year's report on the activities of Friends of Sabeel Australia Incorporated.

For the people of Palestine, Israel and Lebanon the past twelve months has been a most difficult time. There have been few causes for celebration and a great many occasions for profound concern.

We stand in solidarity with our Sabeel friends but we also accept a role as advocates for change in our own Government's policies in the Middle East, as well as for greater understanding of the issues in the churches and the wider community.

The highlights of our year as an organization can be briefly listed as follows:

- Our developing partnership with *Sabeel members in Nazareth* has been the most significant element of the year, and an especially important one given the turn of events since our last AGM. I am looking forward to meeting with the Nazareth members in a few weeks and expect to return with a much better appreciation of their situation. My deep thanks, on their behalf, for the generous response to our appeal for funds to upgrade their computer and email systems.
- Many members around the country were able to see the film *Paradise Now* over the summer break, and in Brisbane we had a successful film screening as a fundraiser.
- The proceedings from the 2004 Sabeel Conference were published a few months back, and are now available as *Challenging Christian Zionism*. We still have stocks if anyone wishes to get their own copy or to buy one as a gift for a parish or college.
- Planning for the *Young Adults Conference* in August and the *Sixth International Sabeel Conference* in November has loomed large this year. The YAC went ahead despite the conflicts in Gaza and northern Israel, but no Australians participated. We had hoped to take a good number of people to the November conference, but it now appears that the group will be much smaller. The conference will be a valuable opportunity for me to meet with other Sabeel coordinators from around the world as well as with Naim and the staff in Jerusalem. Your support in allowing me to attend this conference is deeply appreciated and I look forward to sharing the insights from that experience with our members around the country.
- In late August we held an inaugural Sabeel meeting in *Melbourne*, and I am delighted that Jeff Wild has undertaken the role of convenor for the Melbourne chapter of FOSAU. In the coming year I hope we can form similar chapters in Adelaide, Canberra and Sydney.
- Our links within the region have also developed in the past few months, and it is a pleasure to have Dr Jenny Te Paa from Aotearoa New Zealand with us this evening. We plan to operate very much as a *Friends of Sabeel Oceania* network, even if our legal structures remain Australian.

We are blessed with the support and advice of a fine band of **Patrons**, and during the past year we have welcomed three new Patrons:

- **The Most Revd Dr Phillip Aspinall**, Primate of the Anglican Church of Australia and Archbishop of Brisbane.
- **Rev Gregor Henderson**, President of the Uniting Church in Australia.
- **The Most Rev Joseph Oudeman**, Auxiliary Bishop for the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane.

During the year we have also worked closely with a number of **other organizations** with which we share common interests:

- AnglicORD
- Friends of St George's College, Jerusalem
- NCCA Christian World Service
- Queensland Palestinian Solidarity Committee

Our **membership** has grown steadily during the year, and we have a very low level of arrears in membership payments. This is a sign of a healthy organization, and I thank each member for the part you have played in that success. At the end of September we had 108 memberships (129 people) as well as another 45 contacts who are not members as yet.

Having taken up this role at last year's meeting, at the urging of the **Revd Dr Ray Barraclough** who was the catalyst for our formation in the first place, I am pleased that Ray has not only continued to serve on the Committee of Management but has also indicated his willingness to continue doing so in the year ahead. I have appreciated the opportunity to work with Ray in this project, and especially over the past few months as we have been based in the same building.

The small **Committee of Management** has worked consistently throughout the year. We have usually met on the third Thursday of each odd-numbered month, and this has allowed us to stay on top of a fairly busy agenda. I place on record my appreciation to all three of my colleagues for their efforts during the year, and I note with sadness that Helen Dewar is not available to serve as treasurer in the year ahead.

Thank you for your support and encouragement throughout the year, and for your continued efforts in the year ahead.

Let us pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Greg Jenks', written in a cursive style.

The Revd Dr Gregory C. Jenks
1 October 2006