

Friends of Sabeel Australia Incorporated

Annual General Meeting 2007

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Once again it is my privilege to present this year's report on the activities of Friends of Sabeel Australia Inc.

In my report last year I began by noting that the past twelve months had been a most difficult time for the people of Palestine, Israel and Lebanon with few causes for celebration and a great many occasions for profound concern. Sadly, those opening comments remain valid twelve months later.

We have continued to stand in solidarity with our Sabeel friends but we have also accepted a role as advocates for greater understanding of the issues in the churches and the wider community.

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

- Our partnership with **Sabeel members in Nazareth** has again been a very significant element of our work. It was a special privilege to meet with the Nazareth members during and after the conference in 2006. They are doing remarkable work and our support means a great deal to them.
- The **Sixth International Sabeel Conference** in November last year was a profoundly challenging experience, but it was also good to see Sabeel maturing as an organization and receiving much stronger support from the local churches in Jerusalem. I have written at some length about the conference in other places, so I shall not repeat myself here.
- One of the legacies from the conference has been the weekly **Wave of Prayer** as members of Sabeel around the world join in prayer at 12 noon each Thursday. I know that many people around the world have appreciated this opportunity to join in prayer for our friends in Jerusalem and Nazareth, and for the wider cause of justice and peace in the Holy Land.
- After returning from the Sabeel conference I was invited to represent Friends of Sabeel Australia at the inaugural meeting of the **Australia Palestine Council** in Canberra. The process of developing a coherent and viable national voice for Palestinians continues to be difficult, and I would encourage our members to contribute to this process when and where they can. It has been good to see so many Sabeel people involved in this process already.
- A major focus for our advocacy and educational efforts was the **International Church Action for Peace in Palestine and Israel (ICAPPI)** program to mark the fortieth anniversary of the June 1967 war. Further events are planned for June 2008 to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the State of Israel.
- Our links within the region have also developed in the past few months, and it has been a pleasure to work more closely Dr Jenny Te Paa from Aotearoa New Zealand. We have tried to operate very much as a **Friends of Sabeel Oceania** network, even though our legal structures remain Australian.
- Our **membership** has remained fairly during the year. At the end of September we had 111 memberships (120 people) as well as another 47 contacts who are not members as yet.

The small **Committee of Management** has worked consistently throughout the year. We have usually met on the third Thursday of each even-numbered month, and this has allowed us to stay on top of a fairly busy agenda.

Due to changes in my work situation, I am not able to continue serving on the Committee of Management. As my term comes to an end, I place on record my appreciation to both Ray and John for their efforts during this year when we have struggled to find sufficient people to fill all the positions.

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

Let us continue to pray (and work) for the peace of Jerusalem.



The Revd Dr Gregory C. Jenks
1 October 2007