

*At the request of other St. Boniface parishioners, Lisa Bean asked Kathleen McQuillen from the American Friends Service Committee to make a presentation at our parish about the unrest in Israel/Palestine. Below is Lisa's report from the presentation, her personal reflection on the situation, and resources one might access to learn more about the situation.*

## Connections to the Middle East

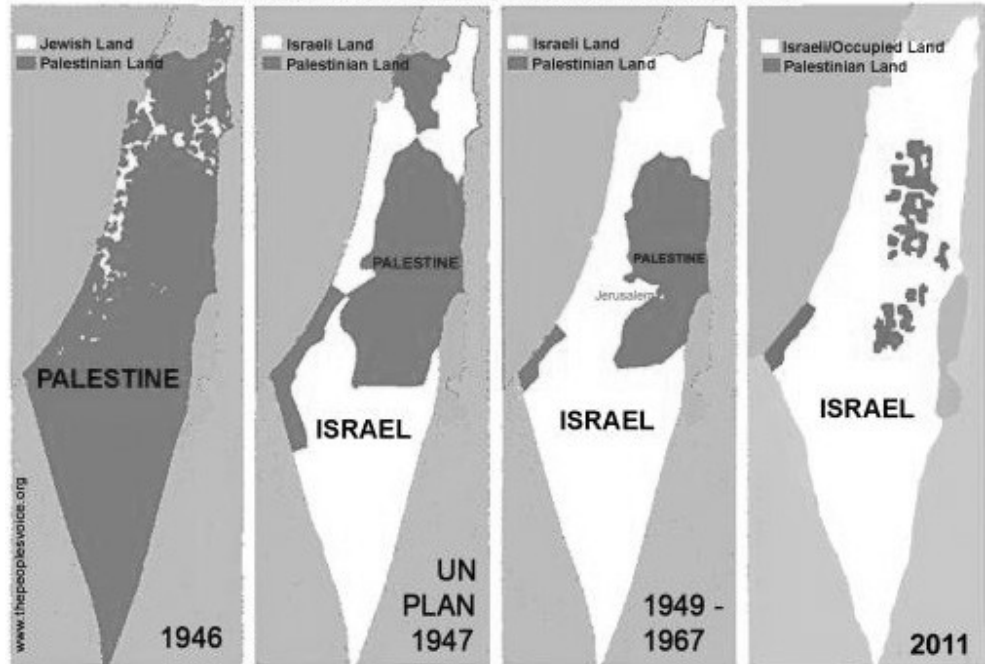
During Kathleen McQuillen's presentation Tuesday, February 6, we watched and discussed a DVD summarizing some of the history of the Palestine - Israeli conflict. This area is so rich in history and so meaningful to Christians, Jews and Muslims alike. It struck me as so ironic that much of the bible that we study is based in this land that we understand so little about today. I kept thinking of Oscar Romero and the "disappeared" of El Salvador — the world at large knew little about what was really going on in El Salvador and Archbishop Romero sacrificed his life for his people who were simply struggling to survive. At St Boniface because of our relationships in El Recreo we are able to see this and maybe understand some of it.

The Israeli-Palestine conflict touches us because we are linked to the land through the history of the bible and the life of Jesus Christ on a spiritual level, and on a real level because many of our tax dollars are spent there in support of the Israeli government.

The video and the glimpse Kathleen shared with us paints a very troubling story about the many people who live in the area who want peace and work for it (both Israelis and Palestinians), but forces much more powerful dominate. It may surprise you to know that many ongoing Israeli settlements are actually on Palestinian land and are thus in the eyes of the United Nations, the international court, and the U.S., illegal. Yet they continue and the Palestinians are condemned because they try to defend land that is actually theirs in the first place.

The question was asked, "How does this happen?" Answers are complicated, but I feel called to pose the

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question to our faith community and encourage people to contemplate the tragedies happening in the Middle East today — they touch us and will continue to touch us because of our shared history and responsibility. My heart breaks for those in Palestine (as in El Salvador) whose story seems lost in a struggle where they feel powerless compared to institutional forces involved.

Our own Bishop Pates, Chairman, USCCB Committee on International Justice and Peace, is one of several religious leaders endorsing the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative (NILI) For Peace in the Middle East's statement on this subject. The group states "We mourn for the lives lost and shattered during the violence that gripped southern Israel and Gaza . . . It is time to break the cycle of violence with bold initiatives for peace." For the complete letter, see link on the U.S. Bishops' website: <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/global-issues/middle-east/israel-palestine/upload/NILIPublicStatement-January2013.pdf>.

For more information and a link to the video we watched at the presentation visit <http://israelpalestinemissionnetwork.org/>.