

Israel Government Donates Land to Christian Leaders

In hopes of fostering tourism, the Israeli government donated 35 acres of land near the Sea of Galilee to a small group of Christian leaders invited to attend a series of meetings with the Ministry of Tourism in early May.

Describing the land as “priceless,” National Association of Evangelicals President Ted Haggard said the May 9 offer was unexpected, and the group isn’t sure how it will respond, though the members discussed building a conference center and resort on the site. In addition to Haggard, the delegation included Michael Little, COO of the Christian Broadcasting Network; American Center for Law and Justice head Jay Sekulow; Ukraine pastor Sunday Adelaja; Australian pastor Brian Houston; and the Rev. Luis Cortés, a Hispanic pastor who, with Haggard and Sekulow, was included in Time magazine’s list of the nation’s 25 most influential evangelicals.

Haggard said the land is within eyesight of where most of Jesus’ ministry occurred, including the spot where Jesus is believed to have delivered His Sermon on the Mount. He said the offer could present “an opportunity for what has happened in evangelicalism to be memorialized in Israel.”

It could also boost Israel’s economy because tourism is the nation’s leading income producer and Christians have continued to visit the area despite long-running and violent land disputes in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The land offer is contingent upon the government approving of the delegation's use of the property. No timetable has been set for them to respond to the offer.

For three days beginning May 8, the group of ministers met with Israeli leaders, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, to discuss ways Christians could partner with Israel. Haggard said Netanyahu described evangelicals as "the best friends Israel has."

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