

A Night of Unity at Christ Church: Arabs and Jews Worship Jesus Together in Jerusalem

Christ Church, the oldest Protestant community in the Middle East, located just a stone's throw from the Jaffa Gate in Jerusalem's Old City, hosted a 'Night of Unity' on Sunday, Oct. 13, 2024, with more than 125 in attendance.

In the middle of a war raging on several fronts, the invitation to the event read: "There's no better time than now, come worship with us in Hebrew and Arabic." A communion service was held in Christ Church, followed by a time of worship in both languages in the courtyard.

Reverend David Pileggi, rector of the historic Anglican Church in the heart of Jerusalem, led a packed congregation through the communion liturgy, interspersed with beautiful singing. Row by row, people went up to receive communion and a blessing, taking part in the ritual instituted by Jesus 2,000 years ago in the same city.

"We have expressed our unity in the most practical way possible tonight," Pileggi told the participants. He also spoke about the love that believers have both received and shared with one another.

People poured out of the church building to join the crowd that had gathered outside as the worship band, SOLU led worship.

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Jews, Arabs and others from the nations intermingled, many clearly being long-time friends. Both old and young were in attendance. Many greeted one another, hugging and catching up.

In contrast to past reconciliation events, where Jewish and Arab believers often gathered but remained within their familiar circles, this event saw no such divisions. Jewish and Arab attendees freely mingled, reflecting relationships that have been established over time. This marks a significant shift from similar gatherings 15 years ago, as both communities have made considerable progress toward reconciliation, building strong bridges over the past decade.

This shift is reflected in the music emerging from believing communities in Israel in recent years. Not long ago, Hebrew and Arabic collaborations in worship were rare. However, artists like Sarah Liberman, Joshua Aaron, Nizar Francis and Carine Bassili have all made a core purpose to create music in Hebrew, Arabic and English.

The SOLU band has participated in numerous projects aimed at uniting Jewish and Arab believers in worship. Originating from the 24/7 prayer house, Succat Hallel, their name, "SOLU," comes from the Hebrew word in Isaiah 62:10 meaning "Build up, build up the highway." Their music ministry draws inspiration from biblical figures like Elijah and John the Baptist, who, as described in Isaiah 40:3, were voices calling in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord."

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On its website, SOLU writes: "We were hearing the Lord calling us to take our place in this generation, to prepare the way for His coming by building up the highway through lifestyles of worship and prayer."

Similarly, Christ Church, which opened its facilities for the

evening, is committed to worship in unity.

“Our lifestyle as a community is a lifestyle of reconciliation, which is one of the main tenets of Jesus’ teachings. Our staff comprises Jewish, Arab and international believers who, as one body, worship together at our centers in Hebrew, Arabic and English,” Christ Church stated.

Go through, go through the gates; prepare the way for the people; build up, build up the highway; clear it of stones; lift up a signal over the peoples. Behold, the Lord has proclaimed to the end of the earth: Say to the daughter of Zion, “Behold, your salvation comes; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.” And they shall be called The Holy People, The Redeemed of the Lord; and you shall be called Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken.

(Isaiah 62:10-12)

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