

Ministry Builds Bridges for Peace in Israel

This week, I had the special privilege of hosting Bridges for Peace to dedicate the first of two ambulances donated to Israel this year. The ambulance was so new that it even had the “new ambulance smell.” It will join the fleet of more than 1,000 ambulances responding to nearly 700,000 calls annually across the nation.

With devoted professional leadership in Jerusalem, and staff and volunteers in nine countries, the partnership between Bridges for Peace and Heart to Heart has flourished on behalf of millions of Christians worldwide who support their ministry, making milestones like this possible. In fact, the lead donor of this ambulance was from Japan. Bridges for Peace has also donated tens of thousands of dollars to Heart to Heart’s virtual blood donation program.

These ambulances were donated in memory of Dr. D. Douglas Young, who founded Bridges for Peace 50 years ago. Dr. Young was an early model and leader among Christian Zionists this past century, and is a role model for us all still today. He was a man of faith and a man of action.

Among many other things in his noteworthy life, Dr. Young moved to Israel and placed his lot with the people of Israel. He wrote frequently in the *Jerusalem Post*, expressing his support for Israel, coming to Israel’s defense, giving Israeli Jews a sense of support and using this pulpit as a springboard to influence others overseas in an era before the Internet.

He was such a pillar of Jerusalem that he received the coveted “*Yakir Yerushalayim*” award, Jerusalem’s highest honor. Dr. Young’s ministry was and still is based in Jerusalem and is a light unto the nations.

As threats to Israel mounted in the 1960s, Dr. Young turned over the ministry's van to be used as an ambulance, as Israel geared up for the Six-Day War in May 1967.

In no capacity was Dr. Young merely an observer in Israel. He was an essential and active part of Israeli society. Thousands upon thousands of Israeli lives are touched directly today by Bridges for Peace's ministry, and the unconditional love expressed to all Israelis. All Israelis, whether we know it or not, are better off because of its work. Thanks to this latest gift to Israel of two new ambulances, for the next decade thousands of Israelis will be treated and lives will be saved.

But amid the celebration, on the same day as the dedication, two Israelis were killed and several others injured in separate terrorist attacks. This represents the challenges Israel continues to face, and points to another more ominous reality.

Over the past several months, ISIS has become an infamous four-letter word, promoting a brand of Islamic extremism that has butchered hundreds—if not thousands—of Christians and others, and would certainly threaten Israel if it could. Israel suffered through another war this summer that left few Israelis unaffected. This led me to think that if Dr. Young were here today, he'd have turned over his own personal Iron Dome battery to defend Israel.

And this month, our attention once again is to the east, where two competing but complementing brands of false messianism threaten Israel again. Still.

The first is Iran. If given the means and opportunity, few doubt that it would realize its threats to annihilate Israel. If Israel ever had an existential threat, this is it.

The other false messianism is the belief that one can reach an agreement with Iran that will change its ultimate goal, and that any agreement that does not completely remove its nuclear

threat is one that simply kicks a nuclear can down the road.

Having read his biography and feeling very much like I knew Dr. Young personally, I feel confident in saying that were he alive today, he would be one of the most outspoken critics of any deal that leaves Israel at risk, and he would be using his global pulpit to make sure the world knew Israel has the right—indeed, the obligation—to defend itself.

And that leads some to think that, with a fast-approaching deadline for negotiations with Iran signaling a possibly rushed—and dangerously unwise—deal with the mullahs, it feels very much like May 1967 yet again.

Two years ago, when Bridges for Peace brought leaders to donate blood in Jerusalem, one of the leaders used this as an example of something with much wider implications. He said, “One of the things that we, as Christians, can learn from Judaism is it’s not just about what you think or what you say you believe; it’s about what you do.”

What’s evident is that Bridges for Peace and all its supporters not only understand this, but are models of it. And I humbly suggest that if Dr. Young were with us here today, he’d be pained by the continued loss of life and threats Israel faces, but very happy to see his vision flourishing here in the land. Even as modest as he was, he’d be very proud.

Not every ministry is able to donate funds for an ambulance. But every donation means the world to those whose lives are saved as a result. When Israelis bleed to death on the street following a terrorist attack, the financial sponsorship of one or multiple units of blood is invaluable to those whose lives are saved. Without it, they might also become another kind of victim.

I pray that this will inspire others to join us in renewed commitment to support Heart to Heart’s lifesaving work, and

that God will touch the hearts of those who practice hatred and worship death, so that Israel and all its neighbors may one day live in peace.

Jonathan Feldstein was born and educated in the U.S. and immigrated to Israel in 2004. He is married and the father of six. Throughout his life and career, he has been blessed by the calling to fellowship with Christian supporters of Israel and shares experiences of living as an Orthodox Jew in Israel. He writes a regular column for Charisma's *Standing With Israel*. You can contact Jonathan at firstpersonisrael@.