

At the Peace Award presentation, many people were moved by the work that had brought this moment to fruition and by the symbolism.

Perhaps, the explanation from Bill Plitt who is the Executive-director/co-founder of the Friends of Tent of Nations North America will allow readers of the FFL to go there and to hear the remarks made by General Secretary of the WMC, Bishop Ivan Abrahams as he spoke at the presentation.

Plitt thanked Abrahams “for his words shared on that cool, breezy evening at Daher’s vineyard, located on that lonely hill which is no longer empty, but filled with God’s spirit and the message of hope. But more, thank you for your presence on the land itself, a place where Daoud’s father had hoped one day that it would be a place of peace, and where people could gather to share their stories. You and members of the Council brought light to the land that night, and left the lemon tree as a reminder. May our paths cross again someday,” Plitt concluded.

Abrahams remarks:

The Nassar family, Distinguished Guests, Sisters and Brothers,

It is a singular honor, joy, and privilege to greet you in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

The presence of Archbishop Chacour, a recipient of the World Methodist Peace Award makes this even a more special moment.

The Vice-President, Ms Gillian Kingston and I bring greetings and best wishes to you on behalf of the Global Methodist/Wesleyan family as we gather to make the 2017 Peace Award to the Nassar Family for their COURAGE, CREATIVITY, and CONSISTENCY in pursuing PEACE, JUSTICE, and RECONCILIATION through the projects and programs of the TENT OF NATIONS.

For the past 70 The World Methodist Council (WMC) has been consistent in its witness and advocacy against the APARTHEID regime, in its pronouncements on the situation in ISRAEL and PALESTINE and in working for peace on the KOREAN PENINSULA (next month we have a Round Table Meeting on the Korean Peninsula at the Carter Centre in Atlanta).

My life has been shaped on the anvil of the apartheid struggle, and I grew up with the mantra, “Freedom in our lifetime.” I pray that this will be true to this generation of the Nassar family. Remember you have an ally in the

There are moments in life when we are very conscious that we are participating in God’s mission in the world. To be here with the Nassar family and friends a few miles from Bethlehem is such a moment especially as you prepare for the olive harvest. I am humbled and thankful to share in this celebration.

Despite threats of the confiscation of your land and many legal battles you faced, your family has doggedly preserved for the last 102 years and faithfully cultivated the land. Today we take heart from the story of Naboth (1 Kings 21:1-29) who remained true to his spiritual heritage – what is inherited cannot be sold but transferred to the next generation. You are doing much more than planting olive groves; you are sowing SEEDS OF HOPE through VOCATIONAL TRAINING, the YOUTH EXCHANGE, and WOMEN EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMS.

I wish to echo the words of two South African Noble Laureates. Nelson Mandela who claimed that the freedom of all South Africans and others around the world is inextricably linked to the freedom of all Palestinians and Desmond Tutu who made it clear that: “if you are neutral in situations of injustice you have chosen the side of the oppressor.” Neutrality allows the status quo of institutionalized injustice to continue.

Friends, Palestinian Christians have given the world a rare gift in the Kairos Palestine Document; A Biblical Message of Faith, Hope, and Love. I recognize that this Document is the voice of Palestinian Christians, direct ancestors of Jesus who tell us loudly and clearly that any theology that legitimizes occupation is far from Christian teaching because true Christian theology is a theology of love and solidarity with the oppressed.

Let us do the right thing, not because of expediency but because our faith tradition demands that we stand within the PROPHETIC TRADITION and follow the GOSPEL IMPERATIVE to seek justice and speak truth to power in love— anything less in the current situation of conflict will be APOSTACY or a MORAL COP-OUT. SILENCE or NEUTRALITY in this situation is not an option.

We CAN and MUST make a difference in this world that God so loves.

Methodists are passionately committed to eco-justice, the care of creation and peacebuilding. We warmly embrace the work you are doing to promote peace and preserving this country and our fragile planetary home, earth.

The canon of Scripture begins with a tree (Genesis 2:9) and concludes with a tree “whose leaves are for the healing of nations” (Revelation 22:2). Let us not forget the tree that stands at the center of our faith.

It is our prayer that here dreams will be incubated and fresh vision will be cast for the future. In the same way that trees are the lungs of the earth and hold up the sky, may the work of the TENT OF NATIONS be the oxygen that breathes new life into this region? May everyone who visits here feels the gentle breeze of the Spirit and be constrained to bend the moral arc of history to greater justice and peace for all of God’s created order.

The “trees” planted by your forebears allowed you to see beyond the present. Subsequently, the “trees” we plant are for the generations yet to be born who will enjoy their shade and share their fruit. Therefore let us, sow and nurture wisely - build upon the great theological contribution, prophetic witness and the moral legacy we have inherited.

As you march toward tomorrow’s world, we pray that you will move forward with unmatched boldness and commitment, drawing new energy from the same transcendent God who cared for and guided your ancestors.

Thank you.