

The PACIS Project in Faith-Based Diplomacy

MIDDLE EAST MISSION #7 TRIP REPORT JANUARY 17 – 22, 2011

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Tim Pownall, Brian Cox and Michael Zacharia led a faith-based reconciliation process for ten American Christian leaders and ten Muslim Brotherhood leaders in partnership with the Al Umma Research Centre in Amman, Jordan January 17 – 22, 2011. Our partners from the Al Umma Research Centre included Dr. Roheile Gharabaih, Dr. Nabil Al-Kofahi and Jamal Al-Tahat.

The PACIS Project in Faith-Based Diplomacy of the Straus Institute of Pepperdine University Law School of Malibu, California, and the International Center For Religion and Diplomacy of Washington DC, has undertaken a track two faith-based diplomatic initiative to harness the transcendent power of religion to contribute to the peace process in the Middle East including as it relates to Israel/Palestine. In essence, we are bringing an innovative model of faith-based reconciliation as a religious framework for peacemaking that has borne tangible fruit in other intractable identity-based conflicts.

Muslim Brotherhood Initiative

The PACIS Project and the Al Umma Research Centre will conduct a series of unique experiences known as faith-based reconciliation gatherings with two strategic objectives:

1. To have each meeting result in softened hearts of Christians from the West and Muslims from the Islamic world toward each other. Softening hearts includes building bridges, demolishing walls of hostility, peacemaking, social justice, forgiveness, healing historical wounds, submission to God and atonement.
2. As an outcome of these meetings, to create a people movement among Christians in the West and Muslims from the Islamic world centered on the ancient divine values of faith-based reconciliation to create a future for our grandchildren. This will stand as the passionate alternative voice to religious extremism in the various faith communities.

This is a work of faith grounded in the unshakeable conviction of the sovereignty of God over all life. As such, the primary outcome that we seek is changed hearts. Only softened hearts between Christians from the west and Muslims from the Islamic world can transform the centuries of deep seated hostility toward each other. The faith-based reconciliation process is designed to accomplish such an outcome as a work of God.

The faith-based reconciliation process is an innovative approach to diplomacy and peacemaking. This approach is defined by eight core values and by a deliberative process that focuses on creating a reconciling spirit between antagonists as a prelude to constructive joint problem solving.

As a methodology it is not a form of interfaith dialogue or a traditional conflict resolution model. It is a totally unique experience that causes participants to search the depths of their own being and to experience at the deepest level the heart of “the other” in a faith-based context.

As such, this is not a gathering of scholars or academics whose purpose is to deliver theological papers and engage in polite discourse. It is not a gathering in which we seek to paper over deep differences between us. It is a gathering of courageous leaders from the Middle East and the West who are willing to sit with “the other” and allow God to soften their hearts. It is a gathering of those who feel a call from God to explore a new and emerging paradigm as a passionate alternative to religious extremism and militancy that is currently choking the world to death with hatred and hostility. History has proven that religious extremism and militancy is a powerful spiritual and social force that will not be overcome by calls for moderation. We must become passionate advocates for faith-based reconciliation between Christians and Muslims because this is the deepest expression of submission to God.

Mission Results

We gathered together 10 American Christian leaders with 10 Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood leaders at the Hotel Intercontinental in Amman, Jordan January 19 – 21, 2011. The U.S. delegation included clergy, an archbishop, retired military, a former Member of Congress, a seminary dean, a Presbyterian church official, journalists, lawyers and professors. Due to unrest in Amman, the original three day gathering was compressed to two days and part of a morning. We utilized simultaneous translation (English/Arabic) for the presentations and sequential translation in the small groups.

One unique feature of this faith-based reconciliation gathering is that it included presentations on each core value by both a Straus/ICRD presenter and a Muslim Brotherhood presenter.

Specifically, what were the results or takeaways from this event?

1. There was definitely a softening of hearts toward each other that included honest and thoughtful exchanges in the small groups, expressions of apology and forgiveness during the Service of Reconciliation as well as the stated desire to work together to build a people movement.
2. There was a clearly expressed feeling by the Muslim Brotherhood leadership that they had finally found a partner from the west in the task of creating a new paradigm of global relationships between the Islamic world and the West.
3. More than in any previous gathering, the participants intuitively grasped the uniqueness and the power of faith-based reconciliation as an idea and as a new paradigm for global human relations in the 21st century.
4. The leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood specifically proposed a second gathering in May 2011 in the United States that would include a wider representation of their leadership from Jordan as well as Muslim Brotherhood leaders from Egypt, Kuwait, Yemen and Morocco.
5. During the gathering it became even clearer that our primary focus needs to be on reaching top U.S. evangelical leaders.
6. Subsequent events in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen and other places have underscored the importance of our years invested in building a bridge to the Muslim Brotherhood leadership.