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ELCA News

Presiding Bishop, LWF Protest Israeli Forces' Intrusion At Jerusalem Hospital

CHICAGO (ELCA) — The presiding bishop of the ELCA expressed the church's "strongest objection" to the entry of Israeli forces September 29 on to the property of Augusta Victoria Hospital (AVH), located on the Mount of Olives in East Jerusalem, during clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinians.

In an Oct. 3 statement on the church's behalf, the Rev. H. George Anderson demanded Israeli troops withdraw from the perimeter of the Lutheran-owned and -operated hospital, saying their presence is provocative, and may lead to additional clashes and casualties. He also expressed condolences to those who have lost friends and family during the clashes. "We are saddened by the deaths and injuries of so many people, both Palestinian and Israeli," Anderson said. "We call on all sides to end the fighting. We urge Israeli and Palestinian leaders to negotiate a lasting disengagement and cease-fire of armed forces and to use their authority to promote an end to the violence."

Augusta Victoria Hospital is operated by the Lutheran World Federation, a global communion of 131 churches representing 59.5 million Lutherans, including the ELCA. As armed conflict erupted in Jerusalem last week, Israeli soldiers entered the hospital grounds during clashes with Palestinians, according to a Sept. 30 news release from the hospital. The source of the fighting — which has since spread to several areas near Jerusalem — was

a controversial Sept. 28 visit by Ariel Sharon, leader of Israel's opposition Likud Party, to a Jerusalem site holy to Muslims and Jews. Sharon was accompanied by a large contingent of Israeli riot police. The soldiers used the hospital grounds to fire at Palestinians outside hospital property, the hospital release said. "We protest the disproportionate and excessive use of lethal force by Israeli forces, their increasing use of live ammunition, their firing of rubber-coated bullets into the faces and heads of Palestinian youth, and their disregard for humanitarian institutions such as the Augusta Victoria Hospital," Anderson said. Israeli security forces continued to block access to the hospital Oct. 3, Anderson said.

During Sept. 30-Oct. 1, several protests were directed to Israeli officials by church leaders. The ELCA's Lutheran Office for Governmental Affairs in Washington, D.C., raised concerns with the Embassy of Israel, the U.S. State Department and the National Security Council at the White House, but tensions continued through the weekend. The Lutheran Office for World Community conveyed concerns to the United Nations as well. Earlier, Anderson was one of several leaders of churches in the United States who addressed concerns about Jerusalem in a Sept. 6 letter to President Clinton. They expressed a desire for a process that would lead to a "shared" Jerusalem involving Christians, Jews and Muslims.

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Guider delivers Burgess Lecture on Global Mission

From Luther Seminary Press Releases

Sister Margaret Guider, OSF, discussed "What Child is This? Facing the Challenges and Hope of Christian Mission in the New Millennium" at this year's Andrew S. Burgess Lecture on Global Mission, Monday, Oct. 2. Guider is an associate professor of religion and society at the Weston Jesuit School of Theology in Cambridge, Mass. Originally from Chicago, she has degrees in education from the University of Illinois and theology from the Catholic Theological Union and Harvard University. She is the second vice president of the American Society of Missiology and a theological consultant to many missionary societies and organizations. Guider has written many articles and reviews. In her book, *Daughters of Rahab*, (Fortress/Trinity Press) she examines the Church of Liberation and the problem of prostitution in Brazil. Her current research interests include the church and the state of the world's children, contemporary perspectives on the Franciscan theological tradition and reflections on the life and writings of Paulo Freire. Professor Craig Moran, Director of the Global Mission Institute said that this is the first time either a woman or a Roman Catholic has given the Burgess Lecture.

The Andrew S. Burgess Lectureship on Global Mission was established in an ongoing effort to introduce leading scholars in global mission to the Luther Seminary community. The lectureship is supported by a fund established in honor of Andrew S. Burgess, former missionary and professor of missions at Luther Seminary.

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Ecumenical student talks about Luther experience

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Editorial: Horrible Truth, Unspeakable Images

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Wanted: more writers and other talented folks!

In the House

Reflections on being an ecumenical student at Luther Seminary

By Robert Buck
M.Div. Junior

I have been told since my arrival here at Luther Seminary that by virtue of my status as a "non-Lutheran" student, I am therefore designated to be an "ecumenical student". I understand that at one time "ecumenical students" were quite a rare thing here at Luther, but that this is now changing as each year more and more brave souls of my ilk subvert denominationalism to come and sit at the feet of Luther and those who carry on his work today. Nonetheless, my minority status retains something of a distinctive character due in no small part to the fact that my Christian heritage not only falls outside of the Lutheran tradition, but outside of the other mainline confessional traditions as well. What follows, then, is the first of a series of articles about "my experience as an ecumenical student at Luther Seminary".

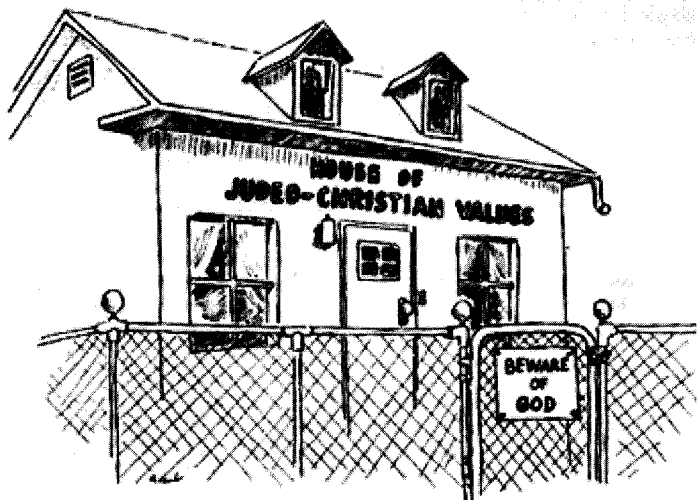
Perhaps, like me, a question seems to naturally arise for you at this point: so what? What makes my "ecumenical" experience worth your time and attention and the paper it's printed on? I must confess that I do not have any profound theological insight to offer (isn't that why people come to seminary, to gain profound theological insight?). However, I am a devoted advocate of stories. If I've learned anything in my first month here at Luther, it is that faith finds root in the stories of God's people and is shaped by God's

dealing with them *in their context*. I've always thought Frederick Buechner puts it best: "Listen to your life. See it for the fathomless mystery that it is. In the boredom and pain of it no less than in the joy and gladness: touch, taste, smell your way to the holy and hidden heart of it because in the last analysis all moments are key moments, and life itself is grace." I hope that in my story, God might be somehow speaking to us all.

It seems that there is another, more basic question that must be answered before I can proceed with my "ecumenical" story: what, after all, is an "ecumenical" student? According to the Microsoft Encarta Online Encyclopedia, the term "ecumenical" comes from the Greek *oikoumene*, meaning "inhabited" and was first used by the Roman Catholic Church to denote "a concern for Christian unity and for a renewal of the church", and has since been applied by Protestants in a more broad fashion (naturally!) to refer to "the worldwide mission of Christianity". Wow! I'm not certain that all of that applies to me, but I would certainly hope that some of it does. In fact, after further reflection, I must state that the above definition of "ecumenical" is precisely what I would hope for myself as I engage in my theological education here at Luther, which, in turn, brings me back to my story.

In my short lifetime I have been affiliated with church bodies belonging to

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Parish Nurse

Editor's note: Due to an editing error, the last paragraph of last week's column was cut short. The following is the conclusion of that article in its entirety.

Just like our bodies, our spirits need special care and feeding in order to stay healthy. Romans Chapter 12 provides a helpful outline for nourishing our spirituality. First, and most important, we need to involve ourselves in a life of worship (12:1. Since we were created in His image, nourishing our relationship with God is the basis of all health and wholeness. Second, we are encouraged to develop a right understanding of ourselves (12:2-3). A healthy sense of self that is consistent with God's perspective can help us to live a life of peace and joy. Third, we can nourish our relationships with others (12: 4-16). Paul uses the symbol of the body to remind us that we are all important parts of the Body of Christ. Our spirituality is made visible when we live a life that reflects Christ's love for all people. Verse 13 reminds us to extend hospitality to strangers. This can be as little as a smile for the one you pass on the street or a more tangible evidence of responding to needs. Fourth, in the world, we can live a life of peacemaking (12:17-21). We are able to conquer evil with peace as we nourish our spirits and reflect the love of Jesus.

The Concord

A journalistic ministry of Luther Seminary students

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Readers are encouraged to submit articles and letters to the editors for publication. All submissions should include the author's name, telephone number and, if a student, class standing. In addition, all submissions to *The Concord* should be prepared in typed, hard copy form as well as on disk if the item is so prepared. It is preferable that documents be in PC format. All submissions should be delivered to our mailbox in the Olson Campus Center (703) or at our office, Gullixson 10.

The Concord reserves the right to publish, edit, or disregard all submissions. "Letters to the Editor" submissions should be limited to 200 words or less while "Guest Columnist" submissions should not exceed 850 words.

Horrible Truth, Unspeakable Images

Scott A. Johnson, M.Div. Middler
Managing Editor, *The Concord*

-- Whether these conflicts are political, religious or racist in nature, God is crying.

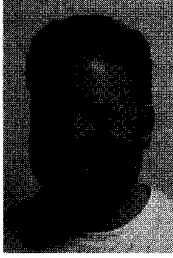
-- I picked up the *Star Tribune* Sunday morning and an immediate feeling of grief and despair overtook me when I saw the front-page photo. How much longer will the world stand by and watch as children are murdered in the streets of their neighborhoods?

-- Regardless of the conflicts in the Middle East, can you possibly justify your horrid behavior in showing a blow-by-blow account of the murder of a child? I don't think so.

(Letters to the Editor, *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, Oct. 3-4, 2000)

A child died in Jerusalem this week. Actually, the death toll surrounding the latest conflict is approaching one hundred, and over 1800 have been injured in the Holy Land, but it is the death of a child that is causing quite a stir in the news media lately. Mohammed al-Durrah, a 12 year-old Palestinian boy, was caught in a crossfire during the first day of fighting and was killed as his father attempted to shield him and screamed for Israeli soldiers and Palestinian fighters to cease fire. A European news crew captured the boy's death on camera, and the image of that death has haunted the conflict over the past few days.

There has been other news related to the fighting. Yasir Arafat and Ehud Barak have been meeting in Paris, trying to patch this latest breach of peace, but their words, spoken from such a distance, ring hollow and accusatory. Each points a finger to the other, claiming that the fighting will stop when the enemy lays down its arms. There have even been more children killed, and other images of death and violence from Israel are available on the Internet, in newspapers, and on network and cable television. Families have been destroyed, trust shattered, tentative cease fires violated and obliterated. This is nothing new for this intense section of the world. But for this writer, violence in Israel has taken on a new meaning, a new face. It is



the face of a murdered child. We heard this week from Sister Margaret Guider about the faces of children in regard to world mission. I heard Sister Guider tell us that a significant question for mission is "why is this child crying?" My question for this week, in retrospect, must be "why is this child dying?"

Had it not been for one news crew, the reality of violence in Jerusalem would not have been driven home to me. Had it not been for one newspaper publishing such horrific images on its front page, I would not have been concerned, I would not have worried, I would not have prayed. Had it not been for the public death of a child, how many of us would have even known about the latest uprising in Israel? How many of us, even with these images so prevalent in the global media, still have no idea what these children are suffering during these times of extreme unrest?

Note carefully that I'm not assigning blame to either side. It is not for me to say who is right, who is wrong. But as a human being, both you and I have the right to say that the death of a child is wrong. Not only is it a right, it is a requirement. We are required by a God who loves all of creation to pray for the welfare of those who have no voice in this fighting. We are required to pray for those children, who had to see one of their own die before the world would give attention to their suffering.

There are times when it becomes necessary to let unspeakable images describe and portray the unspeakable acts of a fallen humanity. This is such a time. There are times when we must speak out on behalf of those with no voice. This is such a time. There are times when showing a blow-by-blow account



Top: An unidentified child crouches in a Jerusalem gutter to avoid sniper fire.

Bottom: Mohammed al-Durrah and his father cower in a crossfire between Israeli and Palestinian combatants. Both were struck by several bullets; only the father survived.

of the murder of a child is not horrid behavior, but responsible reporting to a world which all too often has a tendency to look to its own interest. There are times when the *incurvatus sei* of this world must be shattered by the death of a child of God. Unfortunately, it appears that for Jerusalem such a time has come again.

The Concord is still seeking people to write columns, report on seminary events, and otherwise contribute to our ongoing conversation at Luther Seminary.

If you're interested in contributing to The Concord, please contact us today!

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In the House

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three, very different denominations, and that doesn't include my newly beginning experience here at Luther. This fact has ingrained in me a somewhat subversive attitude toward denominationalism and a great concern for "Christian unity and for a renewal of the church". Of course, I do not assume that my experience (and the resulting mindset) is, or should be, the normative one for all Christians. However, in listening to my life, it seems to me that some important questions are raised in the midst of my experience. A wise preacher once said that the goal of his preaching was to "give people permission to ask questions". It is my hope that in this column we can learn how to ask questions of one another, and in doing so, I believe that we, like Buechner, will find that "all moments are key moments and life itself is grace".

Re-Imagining Millennium Gathering

Join women and men of faith and vision from across the country for *Re-Imagining 2000*, Oct. 26-28, at the Minneapolis Convention Center.



A Re-Imagining Gathering is a joyous meeting of people who seek change in the church and the world. Participants will encounter challenging theology, dynamic ritual and warm hospitality.

Gathering 2000 speakers are: Kathy Black on preaching and healing, Dolores Williams on theology; Rebecca Walker on Third Wave feminism, Thandeka on economics and religion, Mary Daly on eco-feminism, and Chris Smith on community building.

For registration information, call 612-879-8036; e-mail: reimaginer@aol.com, or visit the web site: www.reimagining.org.

ELCA

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Several Lutheran church representatives were present at the hospital for a routine board of governors meeting when the Israeli forces entered the hospital grounds. Among them was the Rev. Robert N. Bacher, ELCA Office of the Bishop, Chicago. The Rev. Said R. Ailabouni, ELCA Division for Global Mission, Chicago, was also present but left before the fighting reached the hospital grounds. Hospital staff treated many Palestinians injured in the fighting, Bacher said, following his return to Chicago. There was fear that Israeli forces would enter the hospital but they never did, he said. Clashes with Palestinians occurred in the street in front of the hospital, and on the hospital grounds, Bacher said. The hospital serves mostly Palestinians, according to Bacher. "Augusta Victoria Hospital has a 50-year history of serving Palestinians, and that is being severely tested," Bacher said. "This shows how important the hospital is to Palestinians, and how well the hospital staff can respond in a crisis." Bacher also expressed concern that the Israeli forces outside the perimeter of the hospital are blocking access for both wounded people and regular hospital patients.

Anderson's statement follows a statement issued by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in Geneva, Switzerland, in response to the situation at Augusta Victoria Hospital. The LWF called for withdrawal of Israeli security forces from the perimeter of Augusta Victoria Hospital, and that a repetition of the events of September 29 "be avoided by all possible means." The statement was part of an Oct. 2 letter from the Rev. Ishmael Noko, LWF general secretary, to Ehud Barak, Israel's prime minister. The LWF's presence and its operation of Augusta Victoria are founded upon "an ethic of humanitarian medical care and assistance," Noko said. "I am sure you will recognize that what occurred at the hospital is a fundamental affront to and seriously undermines this humanitarian purpose, and I must express the Lutheran World Federation's strongest objection and complaint against such use of the Augusta Victoria Hospital premises and property," Noko said. "The presence of Israeli security forces around the hospital not only severely reduces the hospital's capacity to provide medical care to the people of East Jerusalem, including those injured in the recent violence, but also tends to provoke a violent reaction by the Palestinian protestors," he said.