



Annual Report

September 2023-August 2024

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Friends,

We are beyond blessed that you are part of the Network of Evangelicals for the Middle East (NEME). NEME needs you. We're better, stronger, more creative, and more flexible when you're involved.

As our friends in the Middle East watched their society being systematically destroyed this year, NEME has been striving to raise the alarm among American evangelicals more than ever.

We reminded our community of the radical teachings of Jesus for meekness and peacemaking. We pushed back against harmful rhetoric in evangelical spaces like the Southern Baptist Convention resolution about Gaza and the pages of Christianity Today. We called together a strategic gathering with our Annual Forum and are seeking to mobilize our participants for action this coming year. We finished prepping our curriculum for a winter launch coming up in mere weeks.



It's been a lot of work, but it's to address the violence out there and the violence in our own hearts. We dare not stop striving for peace in the face of such dehumanization and devastation.

I hope you'll see in the following pages our heart for peace, our passion for justice, and our commitment to continue and deepen the work. And I hope you'll find ways you can pool your time, talent, and treasure with ours to advance the cause of peace.

Peace,

Ben Norquist

[SUPPORT THE WORK: NEME.NETWORK/DONATE](https://neme.network/donate)

About Us



The Network of Evangelicals for the Middle East (NEME) is a collective of pastors, students, scholars and everyday Christians working together as followers of Jesus toward justice and peace, seeking holistic approaches to conflict in the Middle East, and encouraging the church toward deeper engagement with Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the region.

We Help People to:

LEARN

Go beyond stereotypes about the Middle East. Discover critical issues facing Christians, Muslims, and Jews.

CONNECT

Network with people who have a heart for peace and restoration, while building relationships with the diverse peoples of the Middle East.

WITNESS

Come and see the reality in the Holy Land and explore ways that Christians can amplify God's work in the region.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE: WWW.NEME.NETWORK



INTERCEDING FOR PEACE

Mercy Aiken, NEME Relational Manager, partnered with Leslie Bedard of Threshold Prayer Ministries to launch a monthly online Zoom prayer meeting for evangelicals last year. After the war began, we held sessions on Nov 1 and Dec 1, 2023 and soon launched a regular prayer gathering that has met every month since then. Evangelicals from around the country (as well as a few international folks) joined us to pray for peace and justice in Palestine and Israel, and especially to pray for the dire situation in Gaza. Each meeting had time for all participants to voice their prayers.



We also prayed:

- During a 3 hour training in upstate New York where over 80 local Christians opened their hearts to understanding the need for peace.
- In Lafayette Square, steps from the White House with dozens of other organizations as we observed advent and the coming of the Prince of Peace.
- On a prayer walk to the national Christmas tree with pastors and leaders.
- At a denominational gathering in the Pacific Northwest.
- With leaders from the National Prayer Breakfast.
- With Christians from the Holy Land and Palestine at the Fourth Lausanne Congress in South Korea for an end to all violence and release of all hostages.

NEME'S EVENTS

OUR EVENTS FOCUSED ON THREE AREAS THIS YEAR:

GOSPEL OF PEACE (P. 7)

WE CENTER OUR WORK ON OUR FAITH. THROUGHOUT THE PROGRAM YEAR WE HAD SEVERAL OPPORTUNITIES TO LIVE INTO THAT CALL AND ENCOURAGE EVANGELICALS TO DO THE SAME.

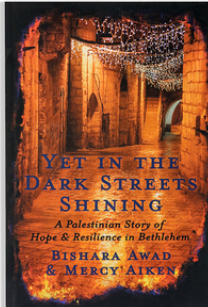
CRITICAL FEEDBACK (P. 8)

AS AN EVANGELICAL NETWORK, NEME WORKS IN A FAITH COMMUNITY THAT CONTAINS DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES ON THE MIDDLE EAST. NEME SEEKS TO ENGAGE DIRECTLY IN THE MOST DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS WITH FELLOW EVANGELICALS.

URGENCY OF GAZA (P. 9)

IT IS NO SECRET THAT GAZA HAS BEEN CENTRAL TO THE NEWS AND THE WORK THIS YEAR. THE NEED FOR A CEASEFIRE AND HUMANITRAIAN AID GROWS MORE DIRE BY THE DAY.

GOSPEL OF PEACE



In the Dark Streets Shining

In fall 2023 Mercy Aiken, NEME Relationships Manager, participated in a two-part webinar with Impact Nations designed to help people discover how God's heart for the poor and broken is found throughout His written word. Mercy discussed her book “Yet In The Dark Streets Shining” and shared her unique insight into Christian and Palestinian relations and how Christians can take a more proactive and helpful role in the conflict.



The Fourth Lausanne Congress

Convened in 1974, the first Lausanne Dialogue was considered to be the widest ranging gathering of evangelicals in history. This year, Dr. Ben Norquist, Director of NEME, participated in the Congress virtually and Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon, member of the NEME Leadership Team, attended in person with considerable networking that garnered important new contacts among the highest levels of evangelical institutional leaders around the world and in the United States. Read more about Mae's trip.



Christ Under the Rubble Co-Sponsor

Alongside Red Letter Christians, NEME helped raise \$100,000 for Bethlehem Bible College via the Advent service “Christ in the Rubble.” This service was livestreamed from Bethlehem and featured Rev. Dr. Munther Issac Palestinian Christian pastor, theologian, and Dean of Bethlehem Bible College. The now-viral sermon has been viewed by over 1 million people globally and included in coverage by Time and Al Jazeera.



Blessed are the Others

Dr. Andrew DeCort and Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac joined NEME's director, Ben Norquist, for this virtual discussion about the power of Jesus' Beatitudes in this world of violence. They discuss Andrew's new book on the topic, a book Isaac has described as pointing to "the way to peace." Isaac, the author of *The Other Side of the Wall: A Palestinian Christian Narrative of Lament and Hope*, shared how the Beatitudes speak to life in Palestine.

CRITICAL FEEDBACK

VIRTUAL

EVENTS



Does "Just War" Justify Too Much? How Christians Can Think Better About Violence

Does "Just War" justify too much? During the war in Gaza, just war theory has been discussed frequently, but what exactly does that entail and how is it being used? Aside from pacifism and just war, are there other Christian ethical alternatives? [This webinar](#) was an opportunity to explore what just war theory is, its historical roots, the way the Church and governments use it today and how we can work toward a more just peace.



Where Did "Moral Clarity" Lead Us? Evangelical

Reflections on Christianity Today's Coverage of Gaza

What do you do when a ministry that helped shape your faith takes up a position that makes you uncomfortable or that you see as problematic? As we discuss in [this webinar](#), Christianity Today fits that description for many American Christians in the wake of its editorial position and coverage of the violence in Gaza.



Be It Further Resolved: A Baptist Conversation on the Southern Baptist Resolutions on Gaza

The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) recently passed resolutions addressing the church's position on the war in Gaza. These have met with both praise and criticism from constituents within the SBC as well as from the larger evangelical community. [This online discussion](#) helped listeners better understand the SBC's resolutions on Gaza and why they are generating controversy within the church.

FOCUS ON GAZA

VIRTUAL EVENTS



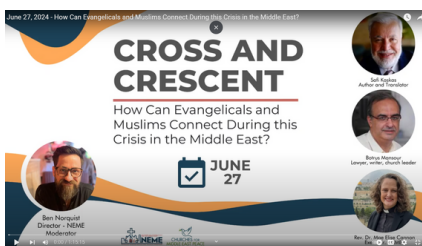
Living Dangerously: An Urgent Conversation with Yousef AlKhoury

Spring 2024, Yousef AlKhoury from Bethlehem Bible College joined NEME to reflect on his childhood in Gaza, his family's experience during the current devastation, and the relevance of his research on "The Kingdom of God and Empires" in this urgent conversation.



Meanwhile in the West Bank

As global attention remains fixed on the devastation in Gaza, a surge of violence and oppression is gripping the West Bank. Palestinians face an increase in military detentions, evictions from their homes, and an escalation in violence from radical settlers, all amid an international silence. NEME's Mercy Aiken shared firsthand accounts from her recent trip to the West Bank. This conversation originally posted on @determinetruth6249



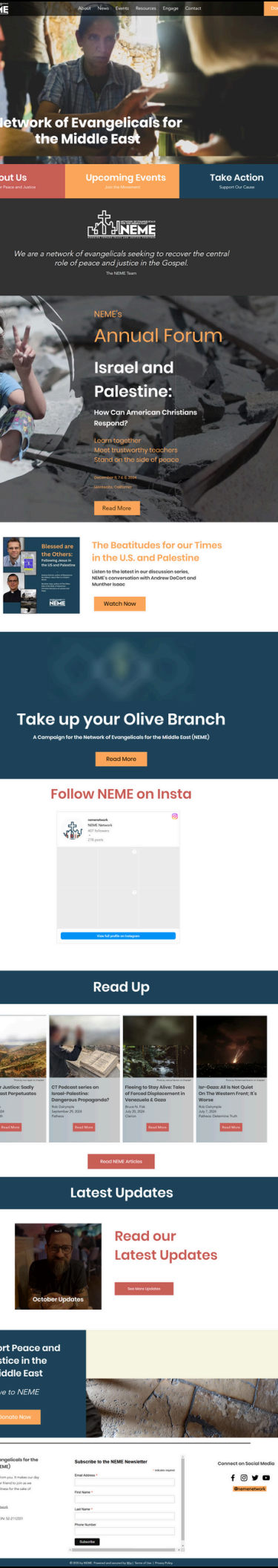
Cross and Crescent: How Can Evangelicals and Muslims Connect During the Present Crisis?

Given the conflation of Muslims and the Middle East in the American imagination, times of crisis in the Middle East further complicate relations. This webinar features a discussion between an American Evangelical, a Palestinian Evangelical, and a Lebanese-American Muslim, reflecting together on the challenges and opportunities for interreligious cooperation in pursuit of understanding and peace.



'What's Next For Gaza? For Israel?

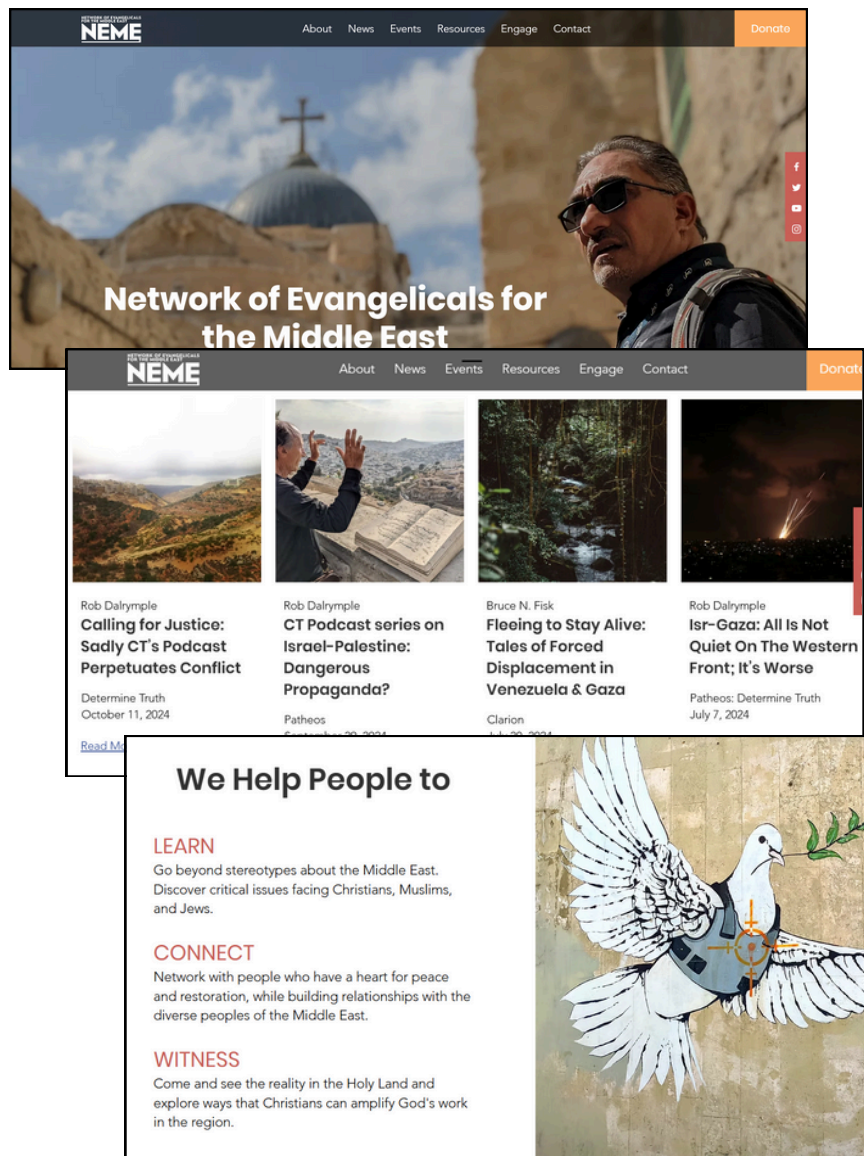
December, 2023, Palestinian Christian and human rights lawyer Jonathan Kuttab joined NEME's Senior Research Fellow, Dr. Bruce Fisk, to talk about the legal dimensions of the present war.



NEME LAUNCHED A BRAND NEW WEBSITE

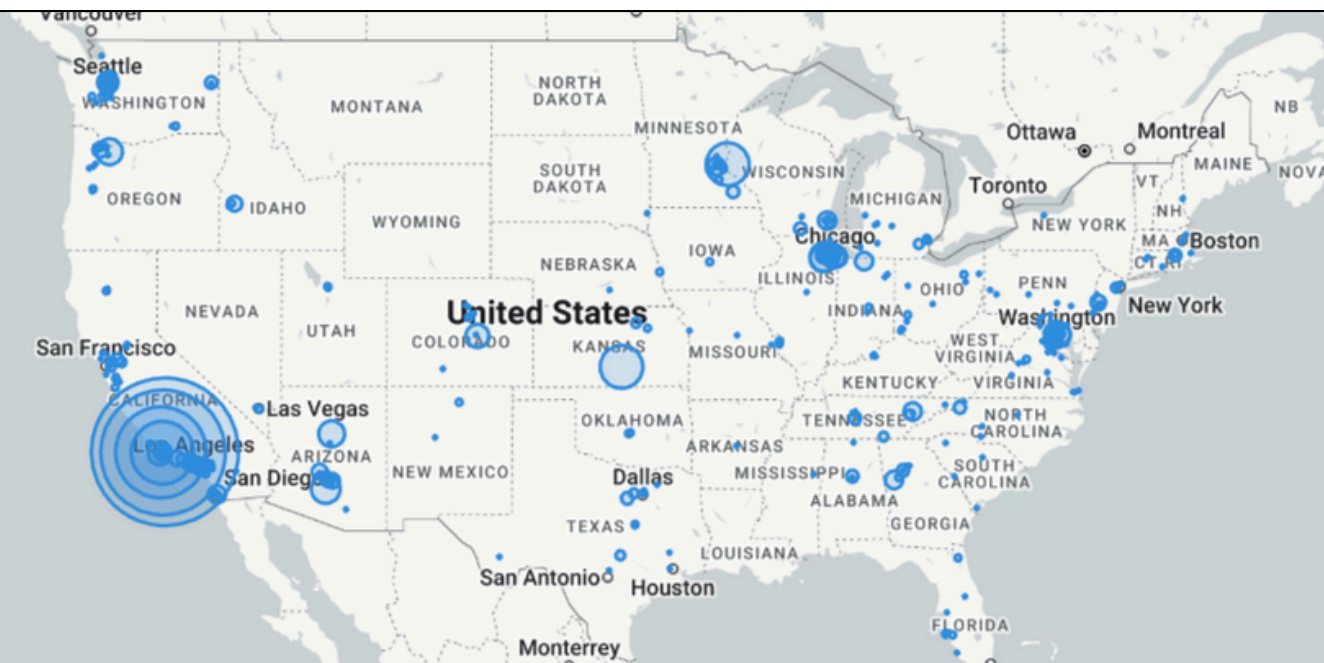
The new website features up-to-date news, important articles, videos, and other media from across the NEME network, and opportunities for constituents to engage including purchasing NEME's new curriculum, registering for upcoming events, and making donations.

Visit the new site: www.neme.network



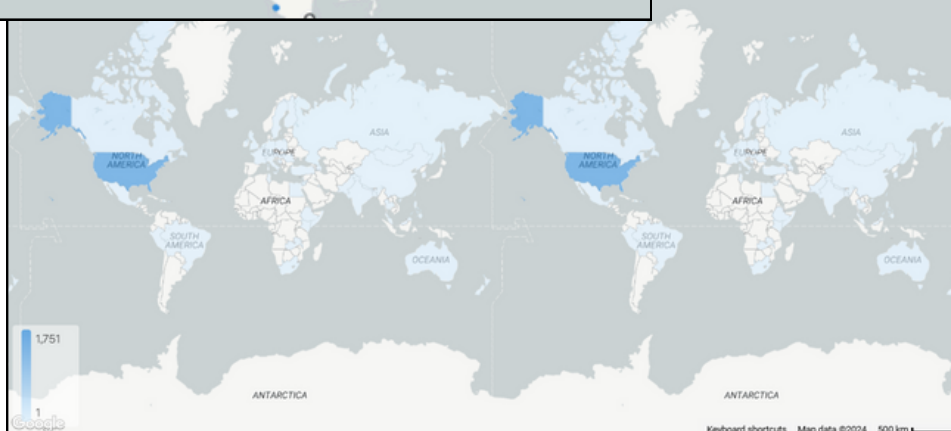
WEB TRAFFIC IS Up

In the first few months: 8,032 page views
2,103 unique visitors



Highest Domestic :

- Seattle, WA
- Huntington, WV
- Santa Barbara, CA
- Ashburn, VA
- Chicago, IL
- Washington DC
- Naperville, IL



Highest International:

- United States
- Canada
- Australia
- U.K.
- Peru
- Israel/occupied Palestinian Territories

SOCIAL MEDIA

@nemenetwork



Reach up by
14%



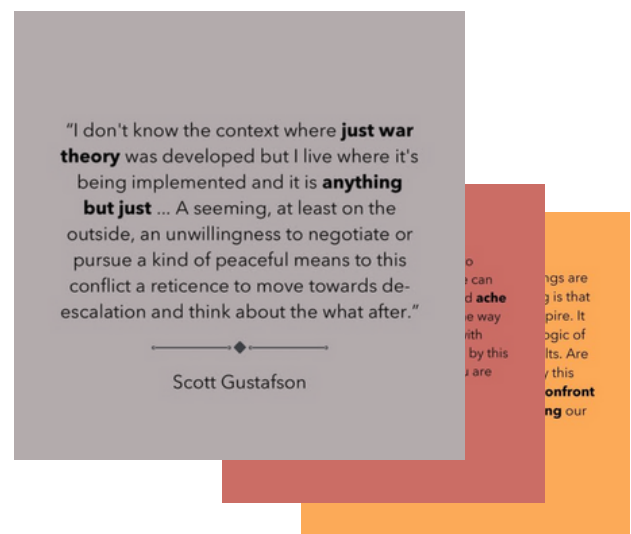
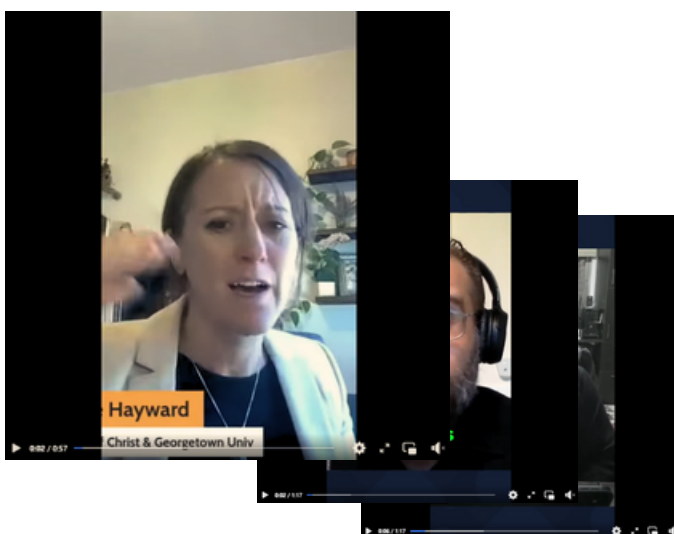
page followers
1,166



views up by
9%

NEW FORMATS

We've adopted new approaches to our social channel including posting clips and quotes from our discussion series events.



Like, share, and follow to join
the conversation at @nemenetwork

NEME ANNUAL RETREAT

FALL, 2023
PHOENIX, ARIZONA

On October 20-22, 2023, NEME held its second annual fall retreat in Phoenix at Desert Springs Bible Church which featured Jonathan Kuttub as a guest speaker. There were about 20 people present, including evangelical ministers, authors, and Bible scholars all committed to exploring the question, “Crisis in the Holy Land: What Can We Do?” We spent the weekend praying, learning, lamenting, brainstorming, and seeking the Lord together to answer this very important question during a time of crisis beyond expectation. Over the weekend, two new people joined our leadership team: Sally Carlson and David Crump. Following participation from our group in the church's Sunday service, attendees left with a renewed sense of purpose, ready to engage in various forms of advocacy.



Picture is from 2022 Annual Forum in Seattle

ASCENT TO JERUSALEM

COURSE FOR CHURCHES AND HOMESCHOOL GROUPS

NEME COURSE

This year NEME finished development of an 9-week video-based course for those who want clear Christian teaching about the Middle East that bypasses tribalism in pursuit of genuine peace.

Primary author, Bruce Fisk, NEME Senior Research Fellow

Executive Editor, Mae Elise Cannon

Video hosts: Ben Norquist and Mercy Aiken

SESSIONS

01. Christian Pilgrimage in the Land
02. Palestinian Christians
03. Jews and Judaism
04. Muslims and Islam
05. History of the Israel-Palestine Conflict
06. The Christian Battle for the Holy Land
07. Struggles on the Ground
08. Imagined Futures, Holistic Blessings
09. Understanding the War in Gaza



CURRICULUM PILOT GROUP TESTIMONIALS

“I think this is a timely piece of teaching that desperately needs to get into the local church.”

“You cover all the bases in a fair-minded manner while representing the needs of Palestinians very clearly. I can only hope and pray that your work will receive a very wide distribution. I think that the "moveable middle" is targeted effectively and persuasively.”

“You were so even handed throughout that I believe a Christian Zionist could probably use the materials to argue their point! But you did very clearly address the flaws in those arguments, without being argumentative, dismissive, or divisive.”

“This is a great resource for motivated people to understand Israel/Palestine.”

“It is very respectful of all sides of the issue. As I mentioned in my email, it was so objectively presented that someone from a differing position could use the materials to push their point of view. But it then respectfully and gently explained why reconsideration of that perspective is necessary.”

LEARN MORE AND GET A SAMPLE OF THE CURRICULUM
NEME.NETWORK/CURRICULUM

MEDIA AND MENTIONS

WRITING & APPEARANCES

At NEME we learn from each other. In that spirit, we like to write and share recent work from among the thoughtful scholars, writers, and everyday peacemakers in our community.

NEME IN THE NEWS



Ben Norquist, Director of NEME is quoted in [this profile](#) of NEME's critique of Christianity Today's coverage of Gaza.

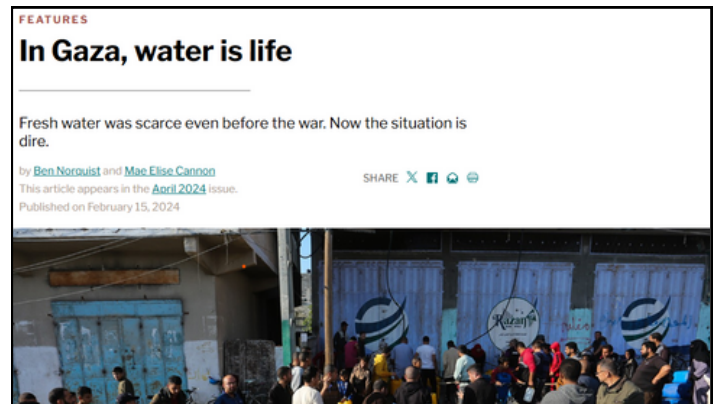


NEME Leadership Team members, Rob Dalrymple and Bruce Fisk are profiled in [this story](#) about conversations across differences

ORIGINAL WRITING (CONT. ON NEXT PAGE)



By Ben Norquist, Director of NEME, Religion News Service



By Ben Norquist, Director of NEME, and Mae Elise Cannon, Leadership Team Member, Christian Century

MORE ORIGINAL WRITING

WRITING



Rob Dalrymple
**Calling for Justice:
Sadly CT's Podcast
Perpetuates Conflict**

Determine Truth
October 11, 2024

[Read More](#)



Rob Dalrymple
**CT Podcast series on
Israel-Palestine:
Dangerous
Propaganda?**

Patheos
September 29, 2024

[Read More](#)



Bruce N. Fisk
**Fleeing to Stay Alive:
Tales of Forced
Displacement in
Venezuela & Gaza**

Clarion
July 20, 2024

[Read More](#)



Rob Dalrymple
**Isr-Gaza: All Is Not
Quiet On The Western
Front; It's Worse**

Patheos: Determine Truth
July 7, 2024

[Read More](#)



Rob Dalrymple
**Two Kids A Day Is Two
Too Many:
Understanding Isr-Pal
#2**

Determine Truth
July 1, 2024

[Read More](#)



Beth Seversen
**Redefining Support: A
New Perspective for
Western Christians
on Gaza**

Prayers4Peace
June 12, 2024

[Read More](#)



Mae Elise Cannon and Ben
Norquist
**The Christians of
Gaza**

The Christian Citizen
December 12, 2023

[Read More](#)



Bruce N. Fisk
**Praised by Faint
Damnation**

Red Letter Christians
November 30, 2023

[Read More](#)

LOOKING AHEAD IN THE WORKS FOR 2025



NEME's Annual Forum

Santa Barbara, December 6-8, 2024

A Forum for Christians hungry for wisdom about the Holy Land and insight about Israel and Palestine.



NEME will be at the National Prayer Breakfast

Washington D.C.

February 2025

Engaging with evangelicals in the new presidential administration will be a critical role for NEME over the next 4 years.



NEME to officially launch church curriculum

Spring, 2025

NEME has meticulously developed the *Ascent to Jerusalem* video curriculum over the last several years. The curriculum goes public in 2025!



Olive Branch

A Campaign for the Network of Evangelicals for the Middle East (NEME)

**Peace is a core aspiration and gift of the Christian life
But we are far from peace today**

NEME seeks to follow Jesus in planting seeds of peace in the church in hopes that the church will be like a thriving garden, a respite for those who are weary of the wars that are raging in and around us, indeed, a sign of the end of the violence itself.

As the world watches the proliferation of violence as a way of life, we believe that being a force for peace will clear away obstacles to the Gospel.

The Olive Branch Campaign

The Olive Branch Campaign will equip NEME to reach the growing number of American Evangelicals who are ready to return to the revolutionary peace of Jesus, peace for the spirit and peace for the world.

Our goal is to raise \$100,000 from 2024 through 2026.

With your support, we will broaden and deepen our work as we lead a movement back to the Gospel of Peace.

[SUPPORT THE WORK: NEME.NETWORK/DONATE](https://NEME.NETWORK/DONATE)





WWW.NEME.NETWORK