

'Bias' Points Regarding Major Frames for Life & Ministry

Appendix A

~It is in my nature to be positive and to look for hope. The glass that is filled half-way is half-full to me, not half-empty.

~My family of origin was an 'alcoholic system.' My 'role' in that system was 'The Mascot.' I joined with 'The Martyr' to hold the family together at all costs. It is my tendency to want to 'hold things together' rather than to 'blow things apart.'

~'Systems Thinking' (Bouwen/Friedman/Steinke) is woven into all that I do. It makes so much sense to me. Congregations and nations are complex emotional systems that cannot be managed by linear processing. Focusing on one particular part of the whole without regard for the many parts of the whole is rarely helpful in problem-solving.

~'Grass Roots' processing makes the most sense to me. 'Top Down' philosophies are not anathema to me I just don't think they work well in the long run. The closer to the ground the seed of an idea is tended the better chance it has to grow.

~My background is "Low Church." While I have developed an appreciation for worship done well in many forms (including "High Church" Liturgy) I still think quite simply about putting liturgies together for worship.

~"Informal" leadership is the best way (maybe the only way in many cases) to move individuals/groups/organizations to their best potential.

~ALC 'congregationalism' with its gifts and challenges has influenced the shaping of my earliest thoughts and practices for ministry.

~My core values are rooted more deeply in "The World War II Generation" than in "The Baby Boom Generation." (Like most "Baby Boomers" I admit to struggling with 'those in authority' as a natural impulse.)

~Collegiality is central in my doing and in my thinking. If colleagues in Christ cannot or will not model community why should we expect others to do so?

~Hospitality is essential. Reaching out to the 'other' or 'others' by simple or elaborate acts of inclusion and kindness lie at the heart of ministry.

~Spirituality is 'the water we swim in.' My spirituality is rather simple, quietly pietistic and somewhat 'old fashioned' I suppose. However, it is not my spirituality to inflict this on others or expect their faith journey to match my own. Sharing our 'faith expressions' seems more natural to me than choosing a style that is best for all.



'Bias' Points Regarding The Holy Land

Appendix B

BT=Perspective observed before the trip.

AT=Perspective observed after the trip.

The Wall

BT: 'The Wall' is a 'necessary evil.' Sad though it is, divisive as it is, it's the only way to control the violence between the 'sides.'

AT: 'The Wall' is a symbol of oppression, separation and a scar upon the land. I want the people of Israel to feel safe, but where and how 'The Wall' is being used is nothing short of Apartheid. 'The Wall' (as it is) is doing much more than controlling violence. It stands as an impenetrable fortress that blocks the path of peace.

Who's Fault

BT: This is the wrong question. It is both impossible to discern and unhealthy by design. Those who seek to solve the issues in the Holy Land by placing this question at the front of the debate will not be effective in the peace-making process.

AT: (Same)

Israeli Settlements

BT: Truly a 'bone of contention' that does not help in the negotiating process. However, Israel needs certain ways to assure its safety. I wish they could do it differently but 'Who am I?' to judge them while I live in safety. It seems like the Israeli Government is backing off a bit anyway.

AT: Settlements are not only a 'bone of contention' but a symbol of Apartheid. The Settlements sit above the land of the Palestinians. They have good roads, easy access, excellent civil services and prime real estate. Below the settlements the situation is much worse on almost every front. The Settlements are not shrinking, but growing. Imagine if you owned a house and someone else controlled the kitchen and the bathroom. Would you feel comfortable in that house? One trip doesn't give me access to answers. I still yearn for Israeli safety as well as safety for the Palestinians. The Settlements provide safety for the Israelis and an incredible loss of dignity and esteem for the Palestinians. I still feel the 'Who am I?' question running deeply through my thoughts. My perspective is broadened to include the Palestinians as I ponder that dilemma.

The Role of Lutheran Christians in the Holy Land

BT: I'm sure they are trying hard and doing what they can. They are squeezed on all fronts and in a tough spot. We should do what we can to remember them and find ways to encourage them.

AT: Lutheran Christians are crucial 'players' in some local communities and in some larger conversations. Their churches, schools and service agencies are vital signs of hope and tools to a better future. Schools invite all and educate all. Services are offered to all. The Lutheran 'presence' is much more powerful than I imagined. I intend to work much harder to support their

important ministries. Lutheran Christians are in a tough spot still. I hope to do what I can to tell their story for it is a story of hope. The world needs stories of hope as beacons of light along the path to peace.

Bishop Younan's Call for Accompaniment

BT: I think he is well-intentioned and sincere. However, his plea for all of us (The Conference of Bishops) to come is a bit over-played and melodramatic. Small group visits were and should be fine.

AT: I was wrong. Bishop Younan was right. Our presence as a group (this would be true for any group of ELCA Lutherans by the way!) was an incredible sign of companionship and care for our sisters and brothers in the Holy Land. It was a remarkable sign to many Palestinian Arabs as well. We were thanked profusely for 'just being there.' It reminds me of how important 'just being there' is at every level of pastoral care in human community. It also reminds me that outsiders with answers, money, influence and power are most affective and effective by 'just being there' before considering all other approaches.

How I Feel as One American and "America's" Role

BT: I am a product of a simpler time. Born in the blush of the mid-'50's I grew up in a family that loved and honored their citizenship and freedoms. I am not ashamed to say 'The Pledge of Allegiance,' put my hand and hat over my heart when an American flag passes by or to do the same during the singing of 'The National Anthem.' I love and believe in the best ideals of this country.

At the same time, I believe our country and system is challenged by flaws and inherent human conditions that test our loyalties every day. We have been unhealthy 'power brokers' and 'conflict avoiders' at many times in our history as a nation. As a Lutheran Christian I am called to speak out against our country or any country when abuses of power, privilege, apathy or desperation lead to human misery.

I do not consider myself a 'nationalist.' (ie. America right or wrong!) At the same time, I absolutely reject the 'Super-Power' as an absolute evil (America is wrong!) approach. We are 'saints *and* sinners' are we not?

The 'Who am I?' feeling seems present in my thinking again in a different way. We live in such a complex country, filled with varied views and intricate sociologies. Who am I to name and proclaim what all Americans should do when I am more puzzled than ever about all this? I try to read and stay informed but I am often hopelessly lost in the massive flow of information, media portrayals and the moving edge of current events.

Our nation formally recognized the nation of Israel in 1948. Our nation, with all its faults, did not have much of a presence in that area before that time. The Holy Land has been abused for centuries by 'Super Powers.' We may need to stand up as a nation with a better example of influence but to focus only on America as the 'savior' or the 'demon' in this matter is at best foolish and at worst quite harmful.

Like it or not Israel is a formal 'ally' to the United States. Of course allies can both challenge and support one another. However, pressuring one President or one Congress to 'do something to fix all this' ignores the need to involve many of us to support or challenge the status of this partnership. I don't find it helpful to push blame or expectations away from myself and other citizens and on to the shoulders of our leaders alone. This is a time to be an 'us' to sort this through as a nation and as a church.

In the build-up to the presidential election of 2000 one candidate had the audacity to say: "I think we can't be of much help until the Palestinians and Israeli's demonstrate the will to want peace for themselves." Soon after, the candidate changed course when intense pressure for stating that belief was received. While it is true that the entire world needs to be urgently aware of how to assist the path toward peace in Palestine I feel it will not have a chance until the two 'core sides' want peace more than conflict.

I do believe that our financial support for Israel lacks accountability. But then, I feel the same about the monies we send to Egypt. It seems we send gobs of money at certain times to certain places without much care for what is done with it. At other times we are more careful and demand better reporting. It might be wise to apply that with Israel.

AT: (Unchanged as to the above.) I would say now that we need to find a way to reward peace-makers in the region with financial and physical support. If a Lutheran School, or Augusta Victoria Hospital improves the hopes for the future we need to invest and support their efforts. It certainly would be important to find ways of balancing our support between the two sides without disregarding our partnership with Israel as the area's only democracy.

The Land

BT: Palestine/Jerusalem has been caught in the middle of the wars between 'Super Powers' for millennia. This land is 'on the way' or 'in between' these forces historically and presently. Jews and Palestinians have been victims and pawns along the way. Their hurts and pains, as people of God, are layered with centuries of bitterness between one another. Sadly, this bitterness is stoked by 'Super Powers' in ways that devastate the land we call 'holy.'

AT: (Same)

ELCA Legislative/Political Statements

BT: I have rarely been comfortable with our 'official' words and expressions regarding the troubles in the Holy Land. Though many statements finally challenge all to work for peace and all to receive justice the conversations often begin with a slant toward the Palestinian cause. This is natural. We have Lutheran sisters and brothers who are suffering there.

We have rarely been satisfied to point out a particular offense without adding comments about 'whole scale' blame on Israel. Often, those words are scaled back. I admit that. It's the energy we begin with that bothers me. It feels as if we are saying "We know WHO is right and WHO is wrong." (That is far different from commenting on WHAT we see as right and WHAT we see as wrong.) Here we are, in a nation that is 232 years old and from a denomination that is 20 years

old boldly knowing what is best for a situation that has been petrified with strife for over 5000 years.

Speaking against acts of oppression and indignity is a duty for all Christians. Speaking against one nation while favoring another is something I disagree with most emphatically.

I believe our statements should speak specifically against actions that bring harm to the peace efforts and the freedom of any people oppressed. These statements do not need to be perfectly balanced. They do need to be reasonably fair and less arrogantly stated.

AT: (Same)