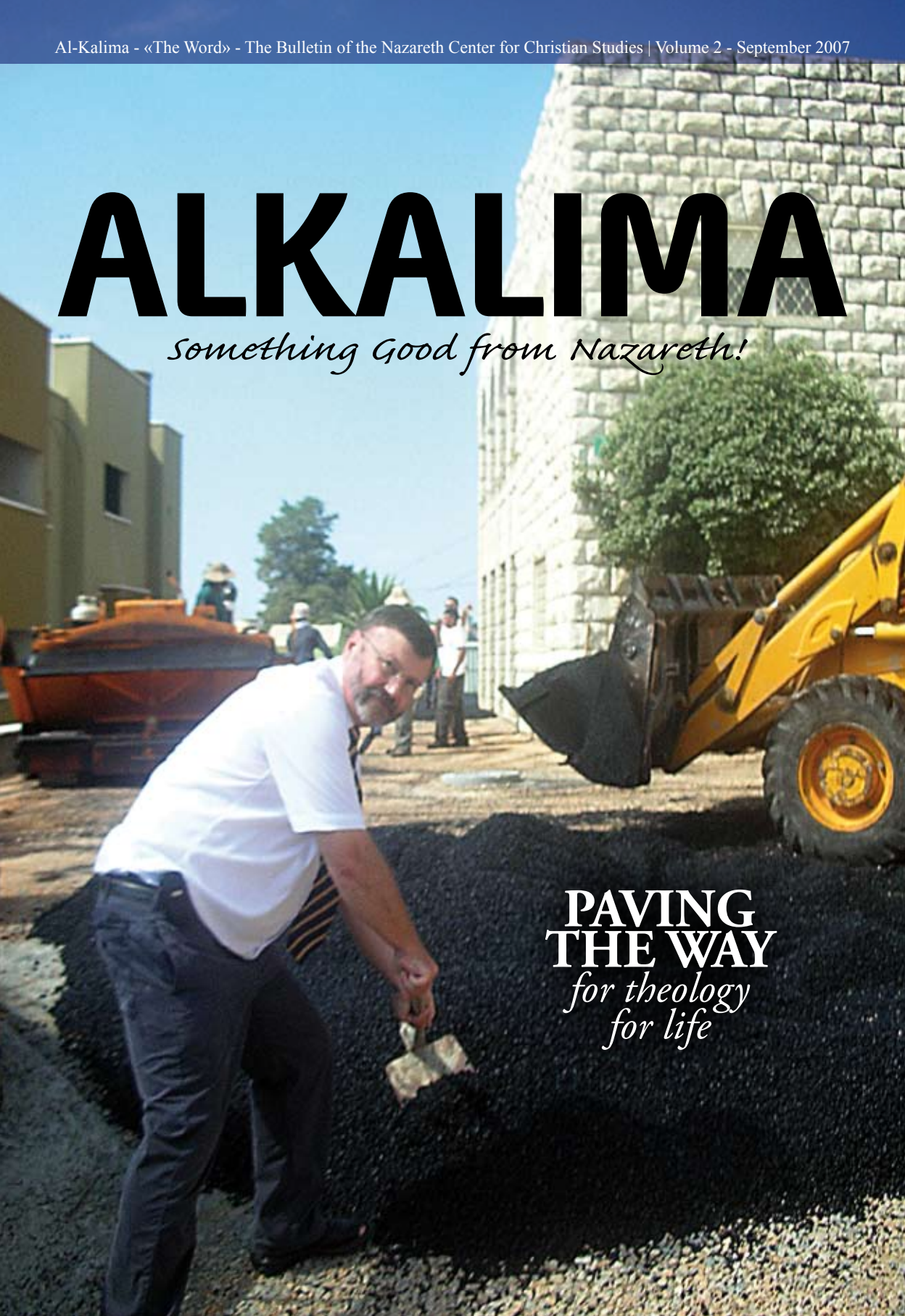


ALKALIMA

Something Good from Nazareth!



**PAVING
THE WAY**
*for theology
for life*

«Al-Kalima»

Something Good from Nazareth

Volume 2 - September 2007

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INTRODUCTION

We are finding that Al Kalima is a developing concept that seems to have a mind of its own. In this edition we have two articles still focusing on 'identity', an article on Jesus' view of women, a lot of introductory material as well as other news. In the future the bulletin will focus more on theology for the people. However, we need also to communicate what is happening at NCCS and also in the evangelical scene in Galilee. We hope readers will feel free to write letters to the editor, reacting to anything which they have read in Al Kalima or making a comment in more general terms. It needs to be relevant, of course.

The Nazareth Center for Christian Studies is about to open its doors to our academic degree programs. We have a good number of students joining us and we have been able to assemble an excellent teaching team. We are at present constructing our library and books seem to be coming in from everywhere. This is an exciting time but still we ask for your prayers that God would be surely with us. We need both His strength and His wisdom. Indeed we are completely determined to walk the path He has prepared for us.

We are so grateful for our wonderful partnership with Spurgeon's College in England. This partnership we feel is a gift from God. Already we are blessed by the support and Christian love of Spurgeon's Principal and staff and we look forward with much joy to working closely with them on their (open) Bachelor of Divinity Degree which we are teaching at the Center. We are excited also by our very positive discussions towards a partnership with the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague. Through this relationship we will be able to offer the IBTS Masters degrees in Theology, Bible and Mission in the coming year.

May the Lord bless us all together as His community and indeed his body in Galilee.

Please contact us if you want to know more about what is going on at NCCS.

We remain in prayer together for God's blessing on Galilee

Yours ever in Him

Editor



Arab Christian Identity: “Who am I?” (Part 2)

Rev. Dr. Bryson Arthur

Who is Jesus? I propose this is the right question concerning Arab Christian identity or for any nationality or race of Christians. I further propose that when human beings are reborn of the Spirit of God they are not reborn Arabs or reborn Jews; they are reborn sinners who are a new creation in God. Jesus the Son of God is at the centre of their new identity.

A New Human Race

This identity is a heavenly identity. The new creature is a heavenly creature not a worldly one. God's new creation is a new race of human beings of a higher order. In this new race there are not peoples of different nationalities and cultures, such as Jews and gentiles, tribes or clans, husbands and wives or families. This new human race is completely and utterly One. All are One in Christ. They are, together male and female, the Bride of Christ.

The new humanity lives in the love of God and the love of each other. This love fully satisfies them. They are utterly accepted and affirmed in God and each other and so they have no identity problem.

They are the royal priesthood of heaven, a perfectly functioning body where all of the gifts are used to the full extent. And as one perfect body they witness and are a part of the glory of God. Theirs is a glorious identity where meaning, purpose and destiny are immediately before them. There is no longer any mystery about their lives. They know God as God knows them and they know the essence and total truth of each other. Each and every unique heavenly human being is completely transparent, completely holy and utterly and devastatingly beautiful.

The Command to Die to the Old Identity

We find in the teaching of Jesus the command to carry a Roman's burden; not only the one mile required by law but to go another mile. We find the command that if someone strikes on one cheek then we have to turn the other cheek for them to strike this one also. We find also the command that if someone asks us for our outer garment (coat) we must give him our inner garment (jacket) also.

These are all signs of the new heavenly identity. Indeed they are positive acts of non assertion. We must not assert our old worldly identity arising from our old nature. To call for justice in the personal realm is to assert the old identity. To take revenge, to judge and condemn are all ways of holding on precisely to what we are and have. Instead, Jesus calls us to forgive and love our enemies and to do good to those who do evil to us.

The Apostle Paul teaches that in Christ we are a new creation and as such we must not regard anyone including ourselves from a worldly perspective:

“So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! (1Cor 5:16f)”

Paul teaches us to put off our old self and become new in our mental attitude. This attitude of the mind we may term our ‘old identity’. This is the person whom we thought we were. We must die to the old nature, giving up or even surrendering our old identity and its delusion. We must live in a new higher understanding of self. A new identity of a higher order.

“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.” (Eph 4:22f)

Effectively Paul is telling us that we must die to the old self. We must embrace a new life and a new personhood. Our old identity must fall away as we move in to our new heavenly identity.

How many Arabs are there in Heaven?

The answer is, none! There are no Arabs in heaven. Neither are there Jews, Americans, British, French or Germans there. There are only Christians in heaven.

Now let me ask: is the Kingdom of heaven here now or is it yet to come? Of course, the answer is that it is both here now and it is yet to come in its fullness. We Christians are called to enter and build the kingdom of heaven on earth. May I ask further, are there any Arabs in this kingdom which is now here on earth? I propose that the answer is the same. No, there are none. There are only Christians in the kingdom of heaven on earth. Only those who are reborn of the Spirit of God. Those who are not believers cannot enter or even see the kingdom! (Cf. John 3:)

Let me ask further; do we carry our old identities as Arabs or Israelis or Jews or Scots or Americans or Palestinians in with us when we enter the kingdom of heaven on earth. This time the answer is yes, we do. Some might answer yes but only until we are sanctified; until we are absolutely holy. We shall then think of ourselves only in terms of Christ. Only then can we say ‘to live is Christ’.

Not quite. Part of our uniqueness and beauty in heaven is that we once were Arabs or Israelis or Scots. Our humanity was founded in God but it was forged in diverse cultures with different world views. This diversity comes together in our uniqueness of being.

One new Man in Christ

All that was wonderful and good and great of the Arab, Israeli, African, Asian and western cultures surely remains. In Christ there is a wonderful new Arab but the new Arab we see and understand as Christian, and the new Arab is one with the new Jew or the new Israeli or the new Palestinian. There is one new man in Christ. One new race; diverse but in perfect harmony and in perfect peace.

“For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.” (Eph 2:14-18)

Paul is referring here to Jews and Gentiles. But we can take the principle of ‘one new man’ further to include all of saved mankind, male and female, Gentile and Jew and every nationality. All who are saved are one identity group: one new culture – the culture of heaven.

Let me return to the primary question for humanity. “Who is Jesus?” Peter gave the right answer. “You are the Son of the living God”. He is the GodMan. What does this mean for us. It means that the Son of God is a Jew, and an Israeli and an Arab. He is a Palestinian, an African, an American and a European. He is male and female, black and white, He is poor and rich. He is One Man for all and for all time.

He is almighty God. One God and One man who is and was and is to come.

Bryson Arthur is the director of the Nazareth Center for Christian Studies. He holds a PHD in Systematic Theology from Glasgow University



Interview *with* Yohanna Katanacho

Rev. Dr. Yohanna (Hanna) Katanacho returned to the country at the beginning of 2007 after receiving his Ph.D. in Theological Studies, Old Testament from Trinity International University near Chicago. He began working as the academic dean of the Galilee Bible College (a branch of Bethlehem Bible College in Galilee). Al-Kalima had this interview with him.

Introduce yourself to the readers.

My name is Yohanna Katanacho. I was born in the old city of Jerusalem in 1967. I am married to Dina Khoury and we have three boys: Immanuel, Jonathan and Christopher.

Your Journey to attain your Ph.D. degree has been a long one. How did it start?

I came to know Jesus as my personal Savior and Lord while I was studying for my B.Sc. in Chemistry. From the beginning of my faith, the Lord called me to His ministry. I originally resisted the idea, trying to realize my own wishes and desires but the Lord surrounded me with His love and His discipline until I comprehended that His plan for my life was the best for me. I became involved in the pastoral ministry of the Alliance Church in Jerusalem, when I was twenty one years of age. During my ministry, I realized the need to study the word of God and begin training. In 1995, due to my great interest in studying theology, I joined Wheaton College to complete an MA in Theological studies, specializing in the Old Testament.

This was thanks to a scholarship from the Billy Graham Fund for leaders who have experience in the ministry.

After completing this course of study, the Lord put on my heart to study for another Masters degree. This time I chose to study at Trinity College and earned an MDiv (Master of Divinity) in ministry.

Soon after my return to the country, I started working with Bethlehem Bible College. I continued to encourage and help strengthen the Alliance Church as well as work in student ministry (IFES). This was for students living in Palestine, Israel, Jordan, Egypt and Lebanon. During that time, I discovered the need for the Middle East to grow in the knowledge of the Lord. I became more interested in theological training and started teaching theological and Bible courses in Galilee and especially in Nazareth.



Have you taken part in other ministries?

In addition to preaching and teaching, I wrote and translated several books. 'The Master Plan of Evangelism' was the first book I translated and the second was 'An Introduction to the Bible'. I also took part in translating Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology. Also, by the grace of God, I published many theological articles. My wife, Dina, shared with me the writing of a book (Release Me) about the role and status of women in Christianity.

But the desire of your heart was for more studies.

Yes. In 2002 my wife and I joined the Trinity International University to work on my Ph.D. thanks to a scholarship from the ministry of John Stott.

This decision wasn't easy, was it?

That is true. It was not easy to leave so much work and souls in which we had invested our lives. There were plenty of financial challenges and hard sacrifices. But by the grace of the Lord we obeyed His calling and went to Trinity.

But the Lord had a blessing prepared for you?

The two of us, Dina and I, went alone to the USA and four years later returned with three children. The Lord blessed us with them. In addition to receiving my Ph.D., my wife is studying by correspondence, a course towards an MA in Christian counseling.

Did you have the opportunity to meet the minister John Stott?

Yes, I met him more than once during my study. We served together for a few days and preached in the same meetings and visited the White House together. I found him to be a very meek person and deeply rooted in knowing the Word of the Lord. He has a great love for the Arabs, and for the Palestinians in particular, with a praying heaviness for them.

What makes Trinity International University so distinct?

Trinity is considered one of the best theological schools in the evangelical world, distinguished by its famous teachers who are godly people with great abilities. Here one finds various theologies among men and women of God encouraging students to grow in knowledge, in humility and in true Christian behavior.

Were there any teachers who influenced you?

I was impressed by many of my teachers but especially by D.A. Carson from whom I learned to be relentless in studying the Word of the Lord. I was also influenced by Professor Wayne Grudem who taught me the importance of

prayer. I thank the Lord for Van Gemeren, a giant scholar in the Old Testament who wasn't only a mentor, a friend and a brother but also a father with all what the word means. He continues to keep in touch to find out how I am doing and to pray for me.

What were the subjects that interested you as a theology graduate?

It is really a pity that many Arab churches are ignoring the Old Testament. I am disturbed by this indifference. I want to take part in increasing the interest in the books of the Old Testament and their messages to the Arab churches in the Middle East. I pray that the Old Testament be a bridge between us and Jews and Moslems and would change from a political means to a divine message leading all to Christ, calling for biblical love, justice, righteousness, equality and freedom for all nations and specially for the Arabs and the Jews in the Middle East and in the whole world.

What was the subject of your thesis?

My thesis was how to study the book of Psalms as a book rather than as individual Psalms. I focused my work on the third book of the Psalter (Psalm 73-89) showing the reappearance of David in Psalm 86 after finishing his prayers at the end of Psalm 72. When David appeared in Psalm 86, he prayed for the nations and the Lord answered his prayer in Psalm 87 as well as in Christ the son of David. If you want more information, you will have to read the thesis that was published by UMI.

Have you served with Jewish Messianic brethren?

Since the beginning of my faith, the Lord showed me how important it is to love all peoples specially Moslem Arabs and Israeli Jews. I discovered the grace of the Lord that strengthens me to love the Jews genuinely, in spite of the suppression of the rights of the Palestinian people by the Israeli government. I also loved all Moslems without exception in spite of my denunciation of violence and bloodshed of innocent civilians. In the light of this love and this emphasis on righteousness and

justice, I welcome all my brothers and sisters including Messianic believers; glorifying Jesus who made us all one body. I witnessed to the Jews about Jesus, as well as to Jewish soldiers. I also witnessed to the Moslems about Jesus; even in the mosque of the Dome of the Rock. I preached in Messianic congregations and took part in distributing Christian tracks on the streets of Tel-Aviv. I talked to Moslem sheiks presenting Jesus. I served in settlements (such as Afrata near Bethlehem) and in refugee camps (such as Dhaisheh).

But your relationship with the Messianic believers had some conflicts?

Every true friendship in a fallen world faces conflicts. I remember I was invited to speak to a messianic congregation in Tel-Aviv where I started to describe the suffering of the Palestinian people and their need for justice as well as for the love of Christ. One of the sisters who could not bear to listen any more to what I was saying, stood up and accused me of lying and did not want to hear me. When she finished her speech, the Pastor asked her to sit quietly or leave the room because she had insulted me.

A few minutes after hearing these hard words, I turned to her and said: I love you with all my heart and pray for you to listen to my sermon to the end. I continued to deliver my sermon

telling about the grace of our Lord Jesus that transforms the enemy into a friend and how the Lord has changed my life and gave me love for the Jewish people and for all who need Jesus. At the end of the meeting, the whole congregation stood to their feet and applauded thanking the Lord for the richness of His love that fills our hearts with His just love.

Your ministry is now concentrated among Evangelical Arab Churches. What are some of the challenges that these churches face?

I thank the Lord for the Evangelical Churches in Israel and for the many families in them. I pray to the Lord to unite our hearts to work together. This is the greatest challenge at this time in the history of the Evangelical Church in our country. Our churches need to develop mutual work, one vision and one spirit.



Dr. Katanacho's family prepared a surprise party for him in the Nazareth Baptist School, to celebrate his PhD achievement. The height of the ceremony was when his wife Dina was invited to hand him a symbolic certificate.

NCCS Certificate in Leadership Development

The NCCS Leadership Development Program, headed by Lisa Loden, is an essential element in all of our academic programs. We are committed to the view that whilst leaders are born, they also require professional training. Christian leaders will benefit greatly from this substantial, high quality and exciting program.

Courses:

- The Life of the Leader 1&2
- Biblical and Theological Basis of Leadership
- Leadership Theory and Leadership Styles
- Communication and Organizational Psychology
- Conflict and Change Management
- Team Building, Coaching & Mentoring
- Pastoral Counseling and Care of the Soul
- Financial Management

Open to All Christians in Leadership

What NCCS is Offering:



Bachelor of Divinity (BD)

NCCS in partnership with Spurgeon's College in London is offering their (open) BD to be taught at NCCS but awarded by Spurgeon's and The University of Wales. It is accredited by the University of Wales. The BD is a 3 year program and includes: Biblical Studies, Old and New Testament, Systematic Theology, Pastoral Care, Preaching, Church History, Missiology, Communication and Hermeneutics, Comparative Religions and Christian Leadership. Classes are from 4.30 to 8.00 in the evening, although there are some intensive courses which will be taught over a period of 7 to 10 days. The BD can be studied on a full time or part time basis.

Masters in Theology (MTh) (from Oct 2008)

NCCS is also in very positive, and almost finalized, negotiations concerning a partnership with the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague. Through this partnership we will offer the IBTS Masters Degrees in Theology and in Biblical Studies. These are 2 year programs full time (3 to 5 years part time). Entry to the program requires a theology degree or the NCCS Pre-Masters Certificate. This is a research degree with the requirement of 6 x 5000 word papers and a 20000 word dissertation.

Pre-Masters Certificate (PMC)

The pre-Masters Certificate is designed for those holding degrees in non theological disciplines who want to go on to study theology as an academic discipline. The PMC is an intensive year of theological and Biblical Studies designed to give entry to the IBTS MTh. Program.

NCCS Certificate in Leadership Development

Integrated into both the Bachelor of Divinity Degree and the Pre-Masters-Certificate is the NCCS Leadership Development program leading to the additional award of the NCCS Certificate in Leadership Development. This is non credit program but it is a highly valuable component in the overall training of Christian leaders and pastors.

Non-Academic / Practical Programs for Lay Persons:

NCCS is happy to run programs also of a more practical nature.

These are:

- Theology for the People – (Lay training Course)
- Women's Program – "Christian Women of Destiny"
- Music & Worship
- Evangelism and Church Planting

These courses will begin soon. Those who successfully complete any of the four programs will be awarded an NCCS Certificate.



Introducing Brent Neely

Brent Neely will be teaching 'Introduction to

the Bible' in the first semester of the BD program. He is the son of a pastor and was raised in the Middle East and Europe. Upon completing his post-secondary education in the U.S. and after a short-term teaching assignment in Portugal, he came to Israel in 1997 with his wife, Loretta, serving with the Assemblies of God churches.

Brent is a PhD. candidate in the London School of Theology and holds a Master of Divinity from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, S. Hamilton, a B.A. in Middle Eastern Studies from the University of Texas in Austin.



Introducing Scott Bridger

Scott Bridger will be teaching 'Christian Spirituality' in the first semester of the BD program. He

has been living in the Middle East since 1998 and serves with the Southern Baptist Convention. He holds a B.A. in Psychology with a minor in Modern Hebrew, from the University of Tennessee, an M.A. in Christian Education, from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, an M.A. in Intercultural Studies, Southeastern College at Wake Forest and an MTh from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (Systematic Theology). Currently, he is doing another MA degree in the University of Haifa in Arabic Language and Islamic Studies.

Gifts for the Nazareth Baptist House

Fund raising is still going on for the complete purchase of the Baptist House in Nazareth, home of the Nazareth Center for Christian Studies and the Association of Baptist Churches in Israel. By the end of August 2007, a total of 312,000 USD was donated. This is towards the total goal of 400,000 USD for the first phase of the project.



Bader Mansour, the Chairman of the Nazareth Center for Christian Studies, meets with Wayne and Buena Stevenson in Dallas and thanks them for their wonderful contribution.

Earlier this year, Wayne and Buena Stevenson from Texas contributed 70,000 USD towards the purchase of the building. The Stevensons are lifelong Baptists with two grown children and many grandchildren. They have been faithful to the Lord since their youth. Wayne taught Sunday school classes for 51 years in a row. Buena shares Wayne's desire to see their financial resources serve the Lord in strategic locations around the world. Wayne trained to be an electrical engineer and eventually built his own company. Through the years, the Stevensons were blessed with business abilities and they honor God with their generous giving. They could not turn down the chance to contribute to Baptist work in Nazareth.

Another wonderful gift came from Florida. Dan Meadors contributed 10,000 USD for the purchase of the Baptist House. He has been a 'journeyman' with the Southern Baptist Convention and lived in the House between 1975 and 1977. He is a successful insurance agent at the moment. His gift was sent in memory of his friend from Nazareth, Aida Jubran.

Contribute to a student Scholarship

Arab Christians, especially those seeking to become candidates for pastoral ministry, and most of our students are, have very little money left after they struggle to meet their domestic needs. Students need to continue in their, usually, low income jobs to feed their families but they also have to answer the call of God to Christian ministry.

NCCS will try to provide scholarships to cover fees and course costs but we need your help. Helping our mission in this way means that you join with us in this vital ministry in the Holy Land. For details, please write to info@nazarethcenter.com or call us at +972-4-646-4898

Preparing for the Opening of the NCCS

Despite the hot weather of Nazareth in August, a group of around 20 volunteers from different Baptist churches showed up for the volunteer day to clear the gardens of the Baptist House. The group was lead by the youth coordinator of the Association of Baptist Churches, Asaad Sadran, from the Cana of Galilee Baptist Church.



A lot was accomplished during this day as you can see from the above picture.



At last the parking project for the Baptist House is currently underway at an estimated cost of 20,000 USD. Baptist House will provide parking for 15 cars that will enable students and other visitors to easily access the building, which is just few blocks from downtown Nazareth. It is located in a quiet neighborhood, making it a perfect location for study. The parking project was undertaken by architect Riyadh Haddad and contractor Mtanis Hanna, both members in the Local Baptist Church, Nazareth.



Messianic Jewish Identity

an introduction

Lisa Loden

The issue of identity is complex. One's personal identity is made up of many components. Individual, personal identity can be described as the unique personality configuration or set of characteristics that belong solely to the individual, differentiating him/her from the rest of humanity. Any individual can and does have multiple identities. One of the tasks of maturity is to fully realize and integrate these various identities. This is often a lengthy and difficult process. Many people suffer from identity crisis or confusion as they struggle to come to terms with conflicting aspects of their identity.

However, identity is not only an individual matter. Although each individual is unique, there are many areas of commonality. Man was not created to live alone or in isolation. A significant aspect of man in the image of God is the issue of relationship and community. God Himself is a community made up of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; separate yet one. Inherent in each individual is the God ordained capacity for and necessity of relationship. No one can effectively live only in terms of himself. This fact frequently complicates the individual's task of mature identity formation.

We live in an age of profound alienation and suffer from superfluity of choice. For this reason, issues of identity are complex and are often laden with confusion and difficulty. This is certainly true in the case of the Messianic Jew in the twenty-first century. Whether it happens early on or at a later date, every Messianic Jew will go through an identity crisis at some point in his walk of faith.

Being born a Jew, regardless of his individual personal identity, the individual is by that birth a part of a people group who has existed from the time of the exodus from Egypt. This people are the people through whom God has chosen to work in history and it is through them that salvation history is realized. Jews today retain a sense of being 'the chosen people.' Since biblical times, the Jewish people have survived 2000 plus years of dispersion, suffering and persecution, having fought to maintain their distinctiveness.

Traditionally, Jews have been identified and defined in a number of ways. One of the most significant identifying characteristics of the Jewish people, both as individuals and as a community, is that they decisively do not believe in Jesus. The Jew who comes to faith in Jesus as Messiah and Lord does not, however, cease being a part of the Jewish people. His sense of himself as a Jew remains even if he is rejected by his own Jewish community. Sometimes this rejection is at the level of his immediate family and it is certainly at the level of the mainstream Jewish community. For the Jewish community, to be Jewish and to believe in Jesus are mutually exclusive. This is often a very real dilemma for the Jew who has become "Messianic."

For the Messianic Jew, the spiritual component of his identity is, or should be, principal. To 'Jewish,' he adds 'Messianic.' It is significant that in his identity designation 'Messianic' precedes 'Jewish.' Having come to a vital, saving faith in the Messiah of Israel, Yeshua (Jesus) the Messianic Jew has in effect realized the fullness of his identity. How he lives out this

new identity is another matter and this is often the arena of conflict.

One would think that the issue of identity would be easily resolvable for the believer in Jesus. It is, however, naïve and unrealistic to expect this issue to automatically resolve as soon as one comes to faith. While it is true that one's spiritual identity is foundational, other identity components are preserved and must find their expression in relation to this foundation. Identity is expressed in relationship and by conduct.

Messianic Jews, in the main, choose to express their identity in forms that are Jewish and at the same time biblical. There is much variety within the movement of Messianic Jews; nevertheless Messianic Jews are a distinctive subgroup. They worship on Saturday (Shabbat), their music and liturgical forms are often have a distinctive Jewish flavor, they celebrate the biblical (Jewish) holidays, and many choose to observe Jewish dietary laws. These are not matters of doctrine, but rather matter of practice.

They are often asked, "Why don't you just call yourselves Christians?" or, "Don't you stop being Jewish when you believe in Jesus?" Messianic Jews are resolute in their assertion that they are both Jewish and Messianic. They believe in Jesus, are part of the ecclesia and continue to be a part of the Jewish people.

For the Messianic Jew living in Israel, the issue

is more complex. The Messianic community in Israel is a vibrant, growing community with over 100 congregations and assorted small groups meeting regularly for prayer, study and worship. Accurate numbers are not available since there has been no recent research but numbers are estimated at between seven and ten thousand. This community is made up of native born Israelis and immigrants to Israel from many nations.

Israeli Messianic Jews are loyal to the state of Israel, send their sons and daughters to serve in the Israeli army, and increasingly are active in many sectors of Israeli society. They are characterized by their commitment to evangelism and in fact, this is a unifying factor in this community that extends throughout Israel. All Messianic Jews adhere to the necessity of bringing the gospel of Jesus to the Jewish people, recognizing that without the Messiah, their people are outside of the community of faith, the ecclesia. The Messianic Jew is secure in his identity as a Jew, as an Israeli citizen, and as a member of the faith community of Jews who believe in Jesus. He also is aware of and embraces his identity as a part of the world wide body of Messiah, where in Him there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither male nor female, neither slave nor free, but all are one in Messiah.

Lisa Loden heads the NCCS Leadership program. Until recently she was Director of the Caspari Center for Biblical and Jewish studies in Jerusalem



The NCCS Women's Program: Women of Christian Destiny

The aim of our Women's Program is to equip women to help reach their potential, know their calling and release them to fulfill their Christian destiny of service for the Church and the Kingdom of heaven on earth. Today, more than ever, we need Christian women to know their identity and purpose in Christ's service and who are equipped and ready to step forward; prepared for the challenges before them. We believe that the key for Christian Arab women, to realize their self-worth and calling is through the healing of hearts and setting the captives free.

Course Outline:

Level 1

- Healing of Hearts
- Women in the Old Testament 1&2
- Women in the New Testament
- Being God's woman
- Spiritual Gifts
- Developing Relationships
- Dreams of a Woman



Reflections on Faithfulness: Dwight and Emma Baker

Hannah Byrd

The legendary evangelist Dwight L. Moody once said, “Where I was born...and how I have lived is unimportant. It is what I have done with where I have been that should be of interest.” More than a century after his death these words ring very true for Moody’s namesake Dwight Baker and his wife Emma, an American couple

matched they are, finishing each other’s sentences (sometimes in another language) and filling in gaps in the other’s personal history with an individual fluidity that I found astonishing and sometimes disconcerting. It certainly provided a captivating experience for me as they relayed, in tandem, the story of a lifetime spent in the service of Christ.



Dwight and Emma Baker, in the retirement home in Dallas

who dedicated their lives to full time Christian service in both Israel and India for over thirty-five years. During their tenure in Israel they played a central role in the early development of the Nazareth Baptist Church and were a vital and significant part of the Nazareth community during the nineteen fifties and sixties.

Dwight and Emma Baker are an indomitable pair to say the least. Both are in their eighties and speak with the eloquence and articulation common to teachers and scholars. As I began my interview I immediately noticed how well

Dwight and Emma Baker were introduced in Waxahachie, Texas in 1945 through a mutual friend at a First Baptist Church picnic. Dwight was attending seminary at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth and Emma had just completed her Masters degree in Christian Training. Not long into their courtship, World War II intervened and Dwight was sent as an army chaplain with the 82nd Airborne Paratroops to Germany. Facing three years away from his sweetheart with no chance of returning to

the states, Dwight came up with an ingenious plan: he arranged for a transatlantic marriage ceremony.

On June 19th, 1946 Dwight’s father spent three minutes performing the wedding ceremony over the phone line “and then we had six minutes for our honeymoon.” Dwight told me, with a twinkle in his eye. “We exchanged phone rings instead of wedding rings.” Emma laughed at the recollection. Fortunately for the newlyweds, Dwight had the opportunity to muster out and the two were reunited.

After the war, the Bakers made their home in Fort Worth, Texas while Dwight completed his seminary training. There they welcomed their first two children: sons Bron and William “Bill,” in 1947 and 1949 respectively. They also acknowledged God’s call on their lives for full time Christian service and were appointed by the Southern Baptist Convention’s Foreign Mission Board. They left for service in Israel in May of 1950 and made their new home in Nazareth. Shortly after their arrival they welcomed daughter Carol in 1951 and son, Steve in 1952.



Dr. Baker holds a painting of Mary’s well, the symbol of the city of Nazareth where he served. The back of the painting says: “From Ateek’s family, 1959”.

Dwight was named pastor of Nazareth Baptist Church and he set to work re-building the congregation and drawing people from the surrounding area. The Nazareth Baptist Church was originally established under the leadership of Shukri Mousa in 1926, but was fragmented and lost almost all its members following the 1948 war. Along with growing the congregation, he and Emma also began learning Arabic, which both eventually mastered. Both Bakers wrote for the local Baptist newspaper which was distributed throughout Galilee. Emma, who was referred to as Em Ja’Bron (in Arabic your name is associated with your eldest sons name) wrote a column on the Christian home that was translated from English into Arabic. Dwight, or

Abu Ja’Bron (though he did not use this name for the paper) was the editor of a section called Al Jam’ah, which means ‘togetherness.’ He wrote and edited entirely in Arabic.

The Bakers started a high school in association with the church the same year that Steve was born, and they began working with the George W. Truett Home for Children which was opened in 1946. At the time, the Orphanage was home to nineteen orphaned and displaced children. Dwight also began a program of home training for young village pastors in 1951. Many of his students made a remarkable impact on the region, including one young man by the name of Fuad Sakhnini, who was one of Dwight’s first pastoral students and has served since 1960 as pastor of Nazareth Evangelical Baptist Church. Another prominent figure to emerge was Fuad Haddad, who became a pillar of the Baptist community serving as teacher and principal at the reputable Nazareth Baptist School and who until recently served as the head of the Association of Baptist Churches in Israel.

After eleven years in Nazareth, the Bakers returned to America so Dwight could pursue a PhD in Middle Eastern Studies and Arabic from Hartford Seminary. In 1963 they returned to Nazareth but were only there for one year before being called to Haifa, Israel. At this time they began the Christian Service Training Center which is the foundation of what is known today as the Nazareth Center for Christian Studies. Their intention was to train not only pastors but lay people of all Christian denominations for service in their region. The CSTC, as it came to be called, was the focus of the Bakers’ ministry during their years in Haifa.

In 1986 the Bakers returned to America for retirement and moved to Waco, Texas where Dwight took a teaching position at Baylor University for three years. Their son Bill made a career out of his fluent Arabic and Hebrew skills, serving in the Air Force, publishing a book on the cultural heritage of Arabs and teaching on Middle Eastern Studies at Baylor University like his father. The youngest son Steve received a degree in music education and evangelism and serves as a missionary in Macau, China with his

wife and children. Their daughter Carol resides with her family in Dallas. Sadly, their oldest son Bron died in 1968 at the age of twenty-one, just days after being accepted into medical school.

When I asked the Bakers to share their favorite Bible verse with me Emma immediately quoted “and we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” (Romans 8:28) Dwight responded in Arabic and then looked to Emma who reached for her well worn Bible and gracefully turned the pages to Psalm 133:1 as Dwight quoted in English (for my sake) “Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!”

The groundwork faithfully laid by the Bakers and cultivated by their hands has provided a richness of opportunity for the promotion and proliferation of the Christian faith in the heart of Nazareth. This is especially seen in the Association of Baptist Churches development of the Nazareth Center for Christian Studies, which is ‘a center for theological learning and Holy Land studies in central Nazareth open to all Christians...[that wish to serve] all evangelical churches in Israel.’ This unique center is housed in the Baker’s original home in Nazareth. Several years ago a dispute arose over the sale of the property and the Bakers paid a large sum of money from their retirement fund to donate the property for use as an educational center. The Center is due to open this September 2007 with several advanced programs in Theology.

As I said my goodbyes to the Bakers that afternoon I reflected on Dwight’s favorite verse and the life he and Emma led in an effort to achieve Christian unity in the land where they worked for so many years. From such solid beginnings, the future of the Nazareth Center for Christian Studies is a bright one. Whatever the future, Nazareth will forever retain the indelible footprints of these faithful followers of Christ: Dwight and Emma Baker.

Hannah Byrd is a volunteer with the Association of Baptist Churches in Israel



Jesus’

Hanan Akleh-Jildeh

It appears that all of mankind have fought and are still fighting for the rights and freedom of their different people groups. Everyone in the world seeks to be acknowledged and respected as being at least equal to all others, and they fight against all that hinders them in order to reach their human potential. The battle was, and still is, the poor fighting against the abuses of the rich and powerful, employees protesting the exploitation of employers, and developing countries fighting against colonialists and colonialism. In the modern world even children seek their rights as whole human beings and youth seek acknowledgement and recognition as having a valid place in society. Alongside these struggles women battle for equal rights and full equality with men and to be accorded the same freedom which men enjoy.

We ask, did Jesus really care for women as equal human beings to men? Was He concerned for, and did He speak out about their rights and their equality? Did He recognise their humanity and valid role in the community which He sought to establish? We could pose several answers to these questions, perhaps all different, but in this place I would like to consider Jesus’ view on women and reflect on this view in terms of our struggle today. We will consider the question: did women have any place in Jesus’ life on earth or were they absent from the gospel story and from Christ Himself?

A first reading of the gospels would show that women were present with Jesus most of His life and at the most critical times; good and sad. At the beginning, God’s choice was that

View on Women: The presence of women in Jesus' life

Jesus would be born of a woman (Gal 4:4), even although the Son of God could have come into the world as Adam had, without father and mother. Instead, he came in through the flesh and womb of a woman who carried him for nine months, and then gave birth. In His childhood and in his youth He lived with His mother in Nazareth. He became a carpenter as his father Joseph before him had been, living in the family house until the age of thirty. It is believed that Joseph died in this period and Jesus stayed with his mother alone for some time, providing her with her living (Mk 6:3). When he left Nazareth to start his ministry he did not leave his mother completely. We see her with him from time to time. We see her at the first miracle he performed influencing Him to commence His ministry 'before the time'. On other occasions he would leave her in Nazareth.

The New Testament is mostly silent in the period of Jesus' youth, but on the commencement of His ministry we read time and again about the women who had a relationship with Him. There were the women who followed him as his disciples had done (Lk 8:1-3). In this light we can see that it is wrong to consider that Jesus' circles included only men. Women also moved with Him from place to place and served Him. In some cases the women following him were equal to the number of disciples if not larger. They too, were hearers of the good news of Jesus. One of the women could not contain herself and declared "blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you" (Lk11:27)

There were the occasions when Jesus deals with women sinners, and of course, there were the women who were Jesus' friends, whom he loved in a similar way to His love of the Apostle John.

For example Martha and Mary, Lazarus's sisters, whom Jesus raised from the dead. "Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus (Jn 11:5).

We also find the women whom Jesus performed miracles for – the gospel mentions some of them. The woman who had the problem with the issue of blood (Lk 13), the Canaanite woman whose daughter Jesus healed (Mt15), Peter's mother-in-law who was in bed with a fever (Mt 8), Jairus' 12 year old daughter whom Jesus raised from the dead (Lk8), and lastly the widow from Nain. Jesus raised her only son from the dead.

We should not be surprised, therefore, to see Mary, mother of Jesus, and other women following Jesus even after he was arrested. They even went with Him to the place of the cross, and in a real sense suffered with him until his death. Judas, on the other hand, sold him for 30 pieces of silver and Peter denied him 3 times and ran away with the other disciples. A woman was the first one to see the empty tomb, the first one to be told by the angel about Jesus' resurrection, the first one that Jesus appeared to and to carry the good news about his resurrection.

We conclude from the above that the presence and involvement of women in Jesus' life was both profound and broad based. Women were always present in Jesus' life situation; both in His company and in the background. They did not feel that they were marginalised or that they were not welcome. Women are seen to be central figures in Jesus' life and teaching.

Hanan Akleh-Jildeh leads the NCCS Women Program. She holds an MA in Theology and an M.Div from the Jordan Evangelical Theological Seminary.





A Word from the ABC Chairman

The pastoral scene in our evangelical churches consists of senior pastors on one side, and a large group of young ministers on the other. The young pastors have not had the opportunity to receive adequate training and teaching and lack experience. Despite this fact and in the face of great difficulties and lack of resources, they have succeeded in carrying the flag and being a light to others.

I see the establishment of the Nazareth Center for Christian Studies as a strategic move, initiated by the Association of Baptist Churches in Israel, to adapt to the real needs of ministers, taking into consideration the special status of our country. This center is an answer to prayers, and we thank God for providing the building for us (Baptist House), and for providing qualified teachers and other resources – so that the needs will be met. I am sure God will bless in building a team of theological scholars and trainers so we can serve the evangelical family and others who are interested in studying the word of God.

We have a special role as evangelicals in this country, to be light to the world and salt for the earth. We need to take a key role in our country and community in order to achieve the goal which is to build the Kingdom of God, and this can be achieved by building adequately trained leaders – in addition to the expertise and abilities that the leader should already have.

I believe we are on the right track in building leaders for the future. I take this opportunity to ask both our senior and junior ministers to use this golden opportunity to take part in study and training – since no matter how much we know, we always need to learn the word of God in order to best communicate it with others.



Monther Naom and Fuad Haddad at the volunteer day in the Baptist House in Aug 2007.

Monther Naom was elected in June 2007 as the new Chairman of the Association of Baptist Churches in Israel, replacing Fuad Haddad who has served in this position for the last six years. He was elected unanimously.

Monther is an elder in the Shafamer Baptist Church and serves also as Chairman of the Evangelical Convention in Israel, where he has been one of the founders since 2005. The Evangelical Convention includes Baptist, Assemblies of God, Nazarene, Brethren churches and around 15 Para-church organizations serving among the Arabs in Israel. The total number of Arab evangelicals in Israel is estimated to be around 5,000. Monther also serves as one of the members of the steering committee of the Nazareth Center for Christian Studies.

Monther is a food engineer by profession and works in the Uniliver chocolate factory in the north of the country. He is married to Zina, a singer and worship leader at the church, who is a food engineer herself, and works as an inspector in the ministry of health. Monther and Zina have 2 children: Dima (plays the piano at the church) and Ibraheem.

Nabil Samara receives a DMin Degree



In May 19, 2007, over 200 students graduated from Asbury Theological Seminary in Kilmore, KY in the USA. Among them was Nabil Samara of Nazareth who received his DMin degree.

The topic of Dr. Samara's dissertation is on narrative preaching. This is based on a theological and biblical understanding of the key concepts of the biblical story from Genesis to Revelation, (namely, the centrality of God, Jesus and the utilization of literary narrative). He investigated the extent of openness of the Palestinian Evangelical churches to a new style of narrative preaching.

Dr. Samara serves as the director of the Nazareth extension of Bethlehem Bible College. Rev. Dr. Samara serves as the director of the Nazareth extension of Bethlehem Bible College. He is also ordained as a Nazarene Pastor.

An Update from the Jordan Evangelical Theological Seminary



JETS and friends of JETS celebrate the progress of the new complex being built in Amman, Jordan

In August 26, 2007, more than 1,200 people came to attend the JETS graduation in the Amman Baptist School; this time in the open air. There were 25 graduates from 7 countries. The degrees given were 11 Masters, 9 Bachelors, and 5 Diplomas. Rev. Dr. Menes Abdel Noor of Cairo, the pastor of the Kasr Aldobara church, the largest evangelical church in the Arab World gave the keynote speech. The president of JETS, Dr. Imad Shehadeh, holds a special place in his heart for Galilee, as his family is originally from the village of Kufur Yaseef. For many years he has been visiting and encouraging churches in Nazareth and Haifa. He also serves as a member in the steering committee of the Nazareth Center for Christian Studies.



Dr. Imad Shehadeh

“I am”, a new book by Yohanna Katanacho

The author says, “There is no Christianity without Christ. And without understanding his identity properly, our Christian identity is lost.” Consequently, Rev. Dr. Yohanna Katanacho highlights the importance of understanding the identity of Christ offering to us in his book an exciting explanation about the identity of Christ in the gospel of John. He writes about the seven “I am sayings” unpacking the historical, literary, linguistic, and theological backgrounds without ignoring the practical applications in the life of the reader. He describes intricate theological concepts in a lucid way taking into consideration the right thinking, pious living, and godly feelings, as well as the Apostle John's desire to aver the importance of accepting Christ and believing in Him. The book is available in Arabic only.





NCCS announces partnership with Spurgeon's College in London

NCCS is delighted to announce a new partnership with Spurgeon's College in London.

This is a full partnership with many benefits for both sides. NCCS will install and teach the Spurgeon's Open Bachelor of Divinity degree (BD) which is accredited by the University of Wales. This is an excellent degree from a university of high standing and international reputation. The degree is three years' duration and students can choose the option of a term of study at Spurgeon's itself. There is also the option of part time study on the program which keeps the door open for those who want a theology degree of this quality but can't manage a full time commitment.

As the partnership progresses, NCCS lecturers will be permitted to design their own courses which are particularly relevant to the context of Israel. It is considered also that Spurgeon's



Rev Phil Hill (Vice Chairman of NCCS), Rev. Azar Ajaj, Dr. Nigel Wright and Rev. Dr. Bryson Arthur. Sneaking in to the picture is the statue of Charles Spurgeon.

own students will be given the option of doing a semester or more at NCCS in Nazareth as a part of their own degree program. Spurgeon's College is 150 years old and was started by the great Christian leader and preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon in 1856. The present principal is Dr. Nigel G Wright.

NCCS Appointment of Dean of Students

The Nazareth Center for Christian Studies is glad to announce the appointment of Rev. Azar Ajaj as the Dean of Students. Rev. Ajaj has served as pastor of a number of evangelical Churches in Israel and served as General Secretary of the Fellowship of Christian Students in Israel and as Director of the Bible Society in the north of Israel. He holds a BA from Bethlehem Bible College and is working on his Masters degree in Biblical Studies from the International Baptist Seminary in Prague. Azar is married to Ibtisam and they have 3 boys: Khalil (14), Wasim (10) and Fadi (7). The appointment of Pastor Ajaj was made possible by the generous contribution from the tithe fund of the Walton

on the Thames Baptist Church in London, where the pastor is Rev. Peter Eyre.



Partners in ministry: Rev. Peter Eyre and Rev. Azar Ajaj in the Local Baptist Church in Nazareth.