Nazareth Project INC

Rasha Saba, Spiritual Director, Nazareth Trust



At the beginning of September, Rasha Saba joined the Nazareth Trust as its new Spiritual Director. She brings a deep faith, a love for her community, and a desire to help Christians remain a faithful witness in the town where Jesus grew up.

Ask Rasha about Nazareth and she will take you to the market and Mary‘s Well, where memories of visits with her grandmother remain vivid.

“There was something so authentic and beautiful about those moments—the freshness of the produce, the people, the sounds, and the atmosphere.” However, “most of all,” Rasha continues, “being there brings back memories of my grandmother and her love… So, whenever I am in that part of Nazareth, it feels like I am reconnecting with those memories and with a little piece of her.”

As she begins this new assignment as spiritual director, one Bible passage that has been speaking powerfully to her is II Corinthians 4 where Paul describes believers as carrying “this treasure in jars of clay.” For Rasha, the image is both humbling and liberating.

“There are moments when the responsibility feels much bigger than me. But the treasure is not the jar. We are fragile and limited vessels carrying something much greater than ourselves.”

Rasha notes that the Christian community in the Holy Land remains small, and over many years its numbers have declined as families have sought opportunities elsewhere. For some, this raises difficult questions about the future. Yet Rasha sees something deeper: evidence of God‘s faithfulness.

“Through all the centuries, the witness to Jesus has not disappeared. That itself is a testimony to God‘s faithfulness. Rather than seeing small

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Chaplaincy Conference Explores Spiritual Care in Times of Polarization



Christine Farah presenting in the Sermon on the Mount Chapel at AMBS

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numbers as a weakness, she believes they reveal something essential about the Christian calling. Jesus never called his followers to be the largest group. He called them to be salt and light: perhaps small in number, but deeply influential in presence.

In a region marked by division, uncertainty and pain, she believes Christians have an extraordinary opportunity to become bridges of peace and ambassadors of hope.

The calling is not to withdraw from the challenges around them, but to serve those who are hurting, to love across boundaries and to demonstrate the good news of Jesus through both word and action.

"When despair becomes loud, Christians have the opportunity to carry another voice, one of hope, love, reconciliation and faithful presence."

Chaplains and pastoral care providers gathered Sept. 28-30, 2026 at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) for a symposium titled *Companions on the Way:* Chaplaincy in Interfaith Contexts. The event brought together practitioners and scholars to examine evolving research, trauma-informed care, and the profound challenges of providing spiritual care in today's fractured world.

Made possible through a grant from The Schowalter Foundation, the conference was a joint collaboration between Nazareth Project, Mennonite Healthcare Fellowship, Mennonite Mission Network, and AMBS. For organizers, the gathering fulfilled a long-standing vision to explore cross-cultural and interfaith care alongside partners with diverse expertise.

"This has been our dream for several years—to highlight the chaplaincy program at The Nazareth Hospital while exploring themes of cross-cultural and interfaith chaplaincy," stated Howard Good of Nazareth Project. "The beautiful venue of the Sermon on the Mount Chapel and the experiences shared by participants were a wonderful combination."

Over three days, participants engaged with pressing issues in modern caregiving. Keynote speaker Cate Beaulieu-Desjardins, Executive Director of Mennonite Healthcare Fellowship, opened with research on the practice of shared humanity, noting the exceptional depth of the symposium. Addressing conflict and social division, Chaplain Christine Farah from Nazareth Hospital in Israel, shared firsthand insights on interfaith care amid war trauma.

Framing broader cultural challenges, Dr. Luis Rodriguez, Director of Pastoral Care for Houston Methodist Hospital, offered a multifaith framework for dialogue. Further sessions refined the



Conference presenters, Christine Farah, Nazareth Hospital, and Cate Desjardin, Mennonite Healthcare Fellowship, chat during a coffee break

caregiver's internal posture and practical skills. Dr. Sunghyun Lee examined mature empathy as a way to hold a person's full contextual reality, emphasizing that "*Companions on the Way* provided a powerful reminder that, indeed, we are not walking this road alone."

Dr. Leah R. Thomas provided guidance on implementing trauma-informed practices at the intersection of spirituality and body memory. Daily worship, led by AMBS Campus Pastor Janeen Bertsche Johnson, centered on Psalm 23.

Joe Sawatzky, Director of the Church Leadership Center at AMBS and event coordinator, highlighted the core theme of hospitality: "As a Christian hospital serving Jews, Muslims, Christians, and others, Nazareth Hospital envisions chaplaincy as making room for others to feel at home and connecting on common ground. This connected beautifully with God the Shepherd as our host and companion on life's way."

The conference concluded with an invitation to consider short-term volunteer opportunities in Nazareth.

[Excerpted from a news release from AMBS. A full version is available at https://nazarethproject.org/news]

Help NPI to match a $30,000 pledge before December 1. Your gifts will further our work and be doubled by the match.

LOOKING BACK... LOOKING FORWARD

2026 FISH FRY

On September 12, NPI held a second fish fry at The River Exchange overlooking the Susquehanna River in Wrightsville PA. The purpose of the event was to enjoy a delicious meal, hear an update from Nazareth Academic School of Nursing and raise money for the Nancy Martin Memorial Scholarship Endowment Fund. **The 120 attendees and other friends of NPI donated more than $60,000 for the fund!**



Tom Knaub, who donated Alaskan halibut and salmon from his fishing trip this summer, chats with friends at the Fish Fry event.



Linda Bomberger, Ruth Lesher, Emerson Lesher, John Bomberger enjoy the fish fry meal at The River Exchange.

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- **Mental health care at Maana Center**

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