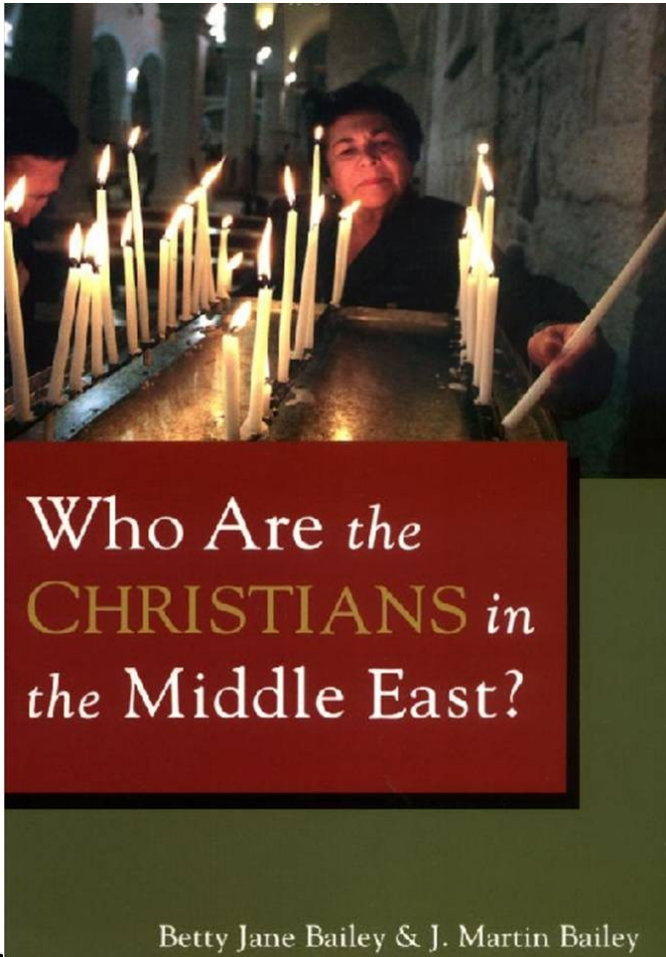


Who are the Christians in the Middle East?



- ▶ *“Today here in the Holy Land, descendants of those first Christian witnesses are still to be found. The Christians of the Holy Land, the “living stones”, continue to bear testimony to the power, truth, and love of the Gospel, as they have done faithfully and continuously throughout the last two millennia in this place...The local Christian community, your brothers and sisters, wish to invite you to their land, to share with you their narrative and heritage, to help you discover the land in which our common faith is still rooted.”*
- ▶ *Michel Sabbah,*
- ▶ *Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem*



Families of Churches

- ▶ Catholic
- ▶ Eastern Orthodox
- ▶ Oriental Orthodox
- ▶ Evangelical/Protestant/Anglican



Centuries of Divisions

- ▶ 451 – Council of Chalcedon
- ▶ 1054 – Schism between Rome and Constantinople

These are the most notable moments of division



Act of Unity

- ▶ Middle East Council of Churches Founding Assembly in 1974 as a major step toward unity between Oriental Orthodox, Eastern Orthodox and Evangelical families of churches.



مجلس كنائس الشرق الأوسط

The Middle East Council of Churches



Christian Churches of Israel - Palestine

Major Christian Communions:

- ▶ Greek Catholic (Melkite) Church
- ▶ Roman Catholic or Latin Catholic Church
- ▶ Greek Orthodox Church
- ▶ Armenian Orthodox Church
- ▶ Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land
- ▶ Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East



Crises for Palestinian Christians

- ▶ Middle Eastern Christians are reducing in numbers. It is estimated that at the present rate, the Middle East's 12 million Christians will likely drop to 6 million by the year 2020.
- ▶ Decline in the population of Palestinian Christians from Jerusalem and the Occupied Territories is accelerating due in large part to the political and economic conditions.



Palestinian Churches Speak Out

In recent years Palestinian Christians have issued several key statements:

▶ **Kairos Palestine:** <http://www.kairospalestine.ps/?q=node/1>

▶ **Communique of the 10th Assembly of the Middle East Council of Churches:**

http://www.oikoumene.org/fileadmin/files/wcc-main/2011pdfs/MECC_Communicu%C3%A9.pdf



U.S. Churches frame work for engagement with the people and churches of the Middle East

- ▶ NCCCUSA Middle East Policy
- ▶ U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops
- ▶ Churches for Middle East Peace
- ▶ Ecumenical Accompaniment Program of the WCC



Tensions of Perspectives

Advocacy Groups

- ▶ Sabeel
- ▶ BDS(Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) Campaign
- ▶ Bethlehem Call Manifesto



Peace Making & Services

Peacemaking Initiatives:

- ▶ Ecumenical Accompaniment Program
- ▶ Christian Peacemaker Program

Aid and Development:

- ▶ Lutheran World Federation
- ▶ Catholic Relief Services
- ▶ Anglican Relief and Development

