

City of Philadelphia



Council of the City of Philadelphia
Office of the Chief Clerk
Room 402, City Hall
Philadelphia

(Resolution No. 240644)

RESOLUTION

Honoring and celebrating Palestinian theologian and educator, Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac, the Pastor of Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem and the Lutheran Church in Beit Sahour, Dean of Bethlehem Bible College, Director of the Christ at the Checkpoint Conference, and Coordinator of Global Kairos for Justice.

WHEREAS, Christian Palestinians have lived on and cultivated Palestinian land since the days of the first Pentecost; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Dr. Isaac's family stretches back hundreds of years on Palestinian land in the town of Beit Sahour; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Dr. Muther Isaac grew up in Beit Sahour, mere miles from West Jerusalem, where his grandfather had moved and flourished before he was forced off of his land during the 1948 Nakba; ethnically cleansed from Israel along with the other 750,000 Palestinians forcibly removed to the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Golan Heights; and

WHEREAS, Having earned his Master degree in Biblical Studies from Westminster Theological Seminary in Glenside, Pennsylvania and his PhD from the Oxford Center for Mission Studies, Rev. Dr. Isaac returned to his homeland and has invested his life in developing Christian Palestinian theological and civic leadership as the Dean of Bethlehem Bible College. Founded by Bishara Awad in 1979, under Israeli military occupation, Bethlehem Bible College is a leading institution of higher learning in the West Bank; and

WHEREAS, Having witnessed the violent hopelessness of the second Intifada and Israel's subsequent establishment of the West Bank Separation Wall, Rev. Dr. Isaac wrote, *The Other Side of the Wall: A Palestinian Christian Narrative of Lament and Hope*. Specializing in the theology of empire, other books by Rev. Dr. Isaac include: *From Land to Lands, from Eden to the Renewed Earth; An Introduction to Palestinian Theology* (in Arabic); a commentary on the book of Daniel (in Arabic); and more recently has published a book on women ordination in the church (in Arabic); and

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WHEREAS, Rev. Dr. Isaac helped establish the Christ at the Checkpoint Conference in 2010. Hosted by Bethlehem Bible College, the Christ at the Checkpoint Conference is rooted in an ethic of love and non-violence that cultivates space for rigorous, respectful theological examination through courageous dialogue with “the other.” This value has led the Conference to invite a broad spectrum of global thought leaders to wrestle with the theological conundrum of the Palestinian Christian experience of occupation and apartheid; and

WHEREAS, In the wake of the brutal attack by Hamas on October 7th and three months into Israel’s catastrophic retaliation, with daily reports of friends and colleagues dying under the rubble in Gaza only days before Christmas, Rev. Dr. Isaac pastored his suffering congregations by asking a critical question that captured the imaginations of followers of Jesus around the world: Where would Jesus be born, if he was born today? The answer: Under the Rubble; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Dr. Isaac serves as the global coordinator of the Kairos for Justice movement; a coalition of Kairos groups in approximately 40 countries; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Dr. Isaac is married to Rudaina—an architect, and together they have two boys: Karam (11 years old) and Zaid (9 years old); now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby honor and celebrate Palestinian theologian and educator Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac, Pastor of Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem and the Lutheran Church in Beit Sahour, Dean of Bethlehem Bible College, and Director of the Christ at the Checkpoint Conference, and Coordinator of Global Kairos for Justice; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this Resolution be presented to Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac as a sign of the admiration and respect of this legislative body.

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CERTIFICATION: This is a true and correct copy of the original Resolution, Adopted by the Council of the City of Philadelphia on the thirteenth day of June, 2024.

Kenyatta Johnson
PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Elizabeth McCollum
INTERIM CHIEF CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Introduced by: Councilmember O'Rourke

Sponsored by: Councilmembers O'Rourke, Brooks, Gauthier, Bass, Phillips and Jones