

Bishop Robert Stearns to 'Post': Stop fighting antisemitism

"There are 600 million Evangelicals globally who have a theological predisposition to be supportive of the State of Israel," said Bishop Robert Stearns.

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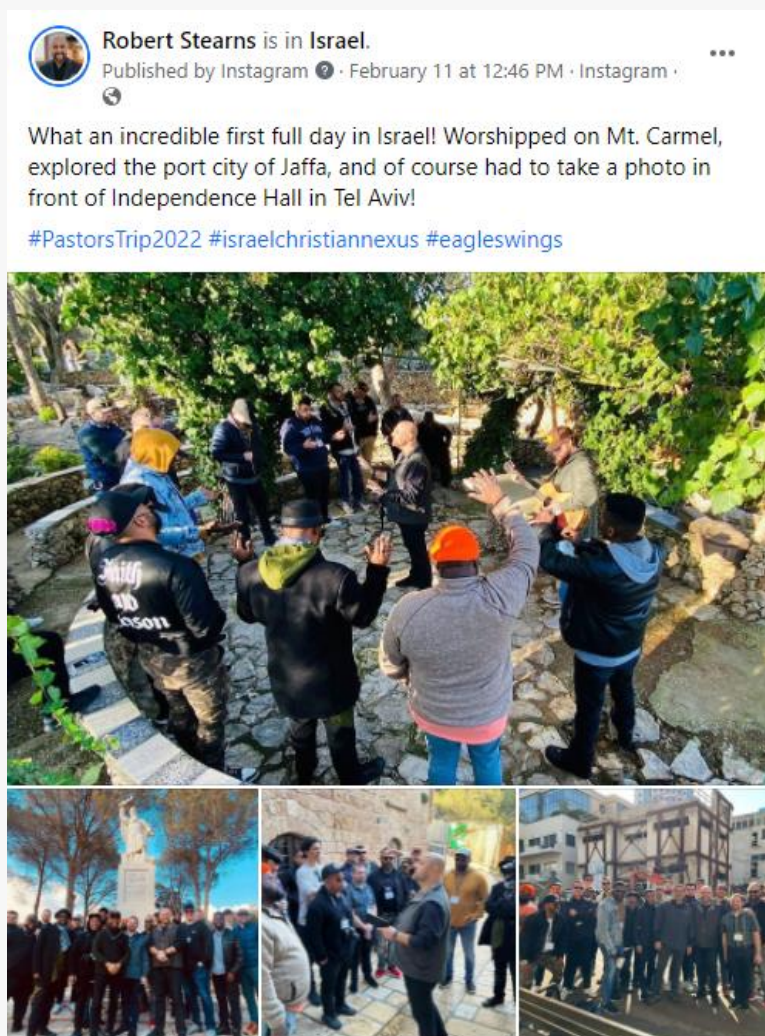
Eagles' Wings founder and executive director Robert Stearns.
(photo credit: EAGLES' WINGS)

The Jewish community needs to learn that the strongest way to fight antisemitism is not to fight antisemitism but to encourage philosemitism, according to Bishop Robert Stearns.

“There are very few anti-Israel people who you can turn around and convince otherwise,” Stearns said. “But there are 600 million Evangelicals globally who have a theological predisposition to be supportive of the State of Israel.”

The founder of Eagles’ Wings Ministries in Upstate New York is back in Israel this week for the first time since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Before the crisis, he would bring three “Pastors’ Trips” a year – groups of young pastors who are learning about Israel firsthand for the first time.

This trip arrived on February 11.



Stearns said that often times, Christian love for Israel stays only “potential until that match is struck or that lightbulb is turned on.”

He estimates that there are tens of thousands of potential philosemities and “we simply need to get them here and get them connected.”

The majority of young pastors who have [come to Israel](#) on Stearns' trips have never been to the country before. Yet, 70% bring back their own missions within 12 months of their experience.

"It's a ripple effect," Stearns said. "We can plant the Israeli flag into each of those congregations and churches and that is where the attention of the Jewish community should be."



This is especially the case in 2022, he said, as the younger generation of Evangelicals reads the Bible less and is therefore less aware of Israel.

A [study published in June](#) by Tel Aviv University found that the rate of support for the State of Israel among Evangelicals between the ages of 18 and 29 has declined by more than half between 2018 and 2021 – from 69% to 33.6%.

A [separate report](#), published in December by Infinity Concepts and Grey Matter found that a higher percentage of Evangelical Christians are “dismissive” toward Israel than loyal to the state. Specifically, the report found that 28% of Evangelicals reject the idea that Jews were ever God’s chosen people and place Israel and the Jewish people as an exceptionally low priority among their charitable behavior. On the other hand, 20% of Evangelicals can be considered “Israel loyalists,” meaning they see the Jews as God’s chosen people and put supporting the Jews and Israel as a high priority, the study showed.

Among Evangelicals who read the Bible daily, 25% are loyalists compared to only 19% who read it a few times a week and 14% who read it less frequently, according to Infinity Concepts and Grey Matter.

“One of the Eagles’ Wings programs is identifying young, emerging Evangelical leaders who have a growing sphere of influence and paying their way on a [trip to](#)

Israel,” Stearns explained. “There are a lot of changes in Evangelicalism. As religion and modernity clash together, I think religious life in general is in an evolutionary moment. So, we want to make sure that in the midst of that, Evangelical young leadership stays connected to the land and people of Israel.”



He said the younger generation is less Bible literate and that “the social justice lens has become so prevalent, and to an uninformed outsider, Israel can seem to be Goliath and the Palestinians David. Until they get here, they do not understand the complexity and the reality of the issues. That’s why trips here are so urgent.”

Stearns has brought nearly 400 pastors from around the world to Israel, he said.

“We tell the story from the moment we land to the moment we leave – the story of the land and the people,” Stearns said.

He said Christians cannot explain their faith without the foundation of the Jewish people.

“Our entire root system is the Jewish people,” he said. “To many it might seem super distant or disconnected. But then they come here, and it comes to life – and that is very real.”