

## Community Reaction from page 1



**Paul Masquelier**

among individual orthodox Jews in the area, Rabbi Lapin says, "Those views are not held by members of Am Echad. I can't understand in the furthest stretch of the imagination how anyone can justify [the assassination]."

If unity of Israel is the foremost concern of most Jews, continuity of the peace plan is of highest concern for some Jews and most non-Jews. Presbyterian Paul Masquelier, executive presbyter of San Jose of 46 Presbyterian churches from Santa Clara County to Monterey County, believes the current peace plan "looks to the needs of both Israel and the Palestinians." When he first heard about the assassination, he asked himself, "What's this going to do to the peace process, especially if it had been a Palestinian?" Masquelier believes there is "risk involved with the peace plan. The question is, how do you empower the *good* people? My own feeling for years is there could never

be peace with the Palestinians unless they had something at stake, something to protect—when you have nothing, it's easy to be—crazy," Masquelier said. The Presbyterian church has long been involved with Palestinian Christians in Lebanon and is the founder of the American University in Beirut.

When Victor Aljouny, vice president of the Arab-American Congress, was asked how the assassination may affect prospects for peace and relations between Israelis and Palestinians, he said, "Now both sides realize they have a common enemy: extremists from both sides who are willing to use terrorist acts to try and derail the peace process." The Arab-American Congress is an umbrella organization that represents about 15,000 Arab-Americans in the Valley. Aljouny is a first-generation American whose parents both came from Palestine. He takes a cautious approach to reassurances by Benjamin Netanyahu that his leadership would continue what Rabin started: "We will see," Aljouny said. "I am not convinced that Netanyahu will support the continuity."

Aljouny believes that to proceed with the peace plan, both sides must accept that the past has happened and stop keeping score from the past. "When you go from war to peace, you have to accept—not necessarily forget, or forgive, but accept—what happened and move forward. The concept of a free and democratic Israel and a free and democratic Palestine are not mutually exclusive ideas. We've got now a core that wants peace, and we've got to show both sides that we can live together

and eventually that becomes the more popular position," Aljouny said.

Ironically, the fatal attack on Rabin, intended to cut down the peace process with its leader, seems instead to have thrown some fence-straddlers unequivocally into the more liberal camp. "This was a wake-up call to many people who were sitting on the fence to realize there's no turning back; the direction the government has taken is the direction Israel must go," said Ruth Sporer.

The fear and pain of the Jewish community were clearly identified, without all the obfuscations of politics and theology, by 16-year-old Donna Bareket, who led the singing of "Shir LaShalom" at the community memorial service held at Temple Emanu-El (see sidebar on page 1). "To me, the assassination is a very



**Victor Aljouny**

deep pain. Israel means so much to me. It's so small, and I'm afraid for it. I'm just hoping the assassination will stir up lots of energy in the people, lots of energy for peace."☆