



PHOTO BY DOUGLAS ADAMS

Rita Adams poses with Elie Wiesel — Holocaust survivor, Nobel Peace Prize winner and author — at the Austin Jewish Book Fair, in November 2006.



Rita Adams (left) is pictured with Moshe Katsav, then president of Israel, at Sukkot in October 2005.



Rita Adams poses with Ehud Olmert, then mayor of Jerusalem and now Israel's prime minister, at Sukkot in October 2005.

Local Christian Zionist provides aid to Israel

By **Tonya Cone**

Special to The Jewish Outlook

When Rita Adams' neighbors invited her to visit Israel with them in 1989, she thought the nation would have nothing to offer her. After her first trip, however, she was hooked on Israel.

"It was an awakening," Adams said. "I found what I wanted to do in life."

Her visits to army bases in the Golan Heights, a kibbutz in the Galilee and Hadassah Hospital, she said, were especially memorable parts of that first trip to Israel.

Nearly 20 years later, she returns there several times a year, has an apartment in

Jerusalem and is founder of Casa Israel, an Austin-based, nonprofit Christian ministry that promotes awareness and informs Christians about Israel and the Hebrew roots of Christianity.

"I want to honor Israel, to let the Jewish people know we owe it to them because we all came through Israel. It's very special," Adams said. "Christianity is an offshoot from Judaism. If Judaism is the roots, we are the branches."

Adams, who was raised in Brazil as a Roman Catholic and is now a Protestant, said Israel and Christians' responsibility for mistakes and atrocities toward Jews in the past were never mentioned during her Christian upbringing.

"We're standing by you. We're not going to cross you again. It's a dangerous time for the West. We have a common enemy," she said, adding that extremist Islam and terrorists threaten both Christians and Jews. "Through education we can bring better understanding and reconciliation."

Strategically, Adams said, she is a good candidate to serve as a liaison between nations, as she speaks several languages and is available and willing to do the job.

When Adams first pursued Israeli advocacy, she sought out social service organizations because she did not want to become involved with missionary groups. Since then, she has supported humanitarian programs through such groups as the

International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem, Bridges for Peace, Hadassah Hospital, Exodus Ltd., Christian Friends of Israel and a Bible translators' group that teaches biblical Hebrew to people from around the globe.

Since Adams is not an official volunteer with any one organization, she can sign up for standalone projects each time she visits Israel. Her work ranges from volunteering with the Bridges for Peace food bank and painting houses for immigrants to working with the Christian Friends of Israel, helping brides from Russia with wedding gowns. She also has built bomb

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shelters in Sderot and worked with absorption centers to provide clothing and food to immigrants.

"It's something that speaks to my heart," Adams said.

When visiting Israel, Adams and those who go with her take such items as eyeglasses and basic pieces of clothing. They also buy things there to help the local economy.

Adams said taking others to Israel changes their hearts, and upon returning to the United States they act as ambassadors for Israel.

While in Austin, Adams runs Casa Israel, a nonprofit dedicated to Christian awareness of Israel. Casa Israel organizes educational conferences and speakers, some of who are from Israel, to visit local churches to discuss Israel's beauty and the needs of its people.

Adams, who previously worked as a music producer in Nashville, Tenn., said she also uses art, biblical dramas and music to help spread her message. Casa Israel's gift shop features the works of Israeli artists, and Adams was the local producer for "The Covenant: The Story of My People," a musical drama about the history of the Jewish people from the time of Abraham to the creation of the state of Israel. The film was shown at schools, military bases and theaters in seven cities across the United States and 41 in Europe.

On May 10, Adams participated in the Global Day of Prayer, in which Christians around the world prayed together. The



Rita Adams poses in front of the Chagall windows at the Synagogue of the Hadassah-Hebrew University Medical Center in Jerusalem, in 2007.

PHOTO BY DOUGLAS ADAMS

event was held locally at Promise Land Church. When asked to participate in the event, Adams agreed only when a prayer for Israel was added to the program.

In Austin, Adams also organizes fundraisers to supplement government and other charitable aid in Israel. The funds help victims and others in need of such items as food, bus passes and medical care, as well as toward building facilities.

"This is practical Zionism," Adams said. "We're saying we'll stand with you

through hard times, and when the danger passes, we'll rejoice. We need to honor Israel because what we have come from there."

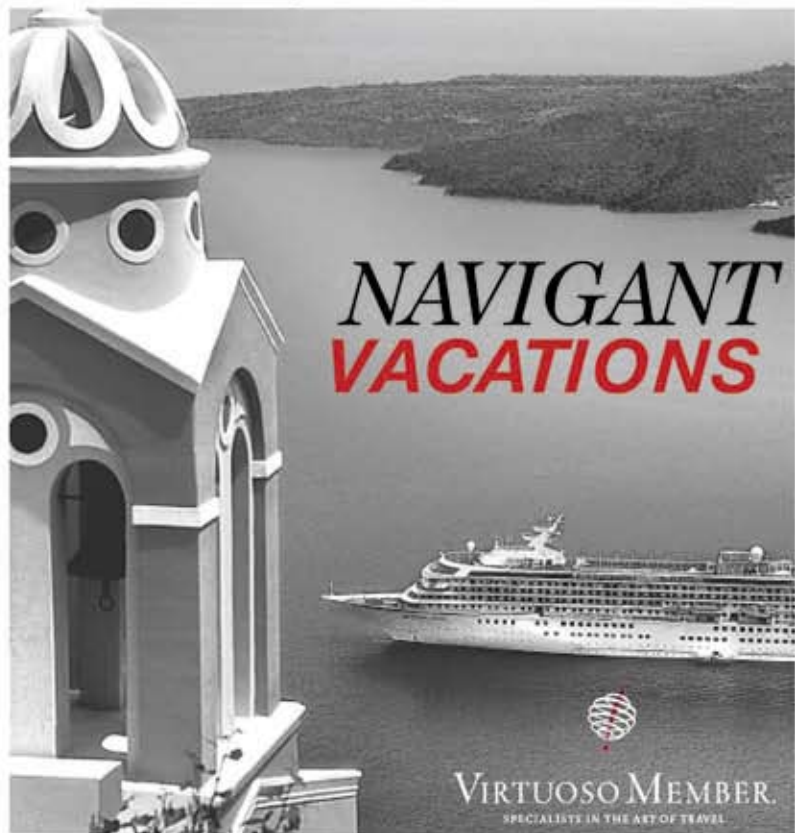
Adams has encountered skepticism from Jews and Christians alike. Christians question whether she is trying to "Judaize" them, while Jews suspect she is a missionary. To break down distrust and other barriers, Casa Israel sponsors joint events with Austin's Jewish community, such as the Jewish Christian Alliance.

"Once people see what we're doing, they get a different understanding," she said. "We need to walk together to know each other."

Visit the Web site www.casaisrael.com or contact Adams at rita.adams@casaisrael.com for more information about Casa Israel.

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