



Churches for Middle East Peace

Church Toolkit for Israeli-Palestinian Peacemaking

Introduction and Guide to the Toolkit

Many American Christians share a concern for peace in the Holy Land. They are drawn to this troubled region because of their spiritual connections to the places of Jesus' ministry, their relationships with the struggling Christian community, their concern for the suffering peoples of the conflict and their commitment to peacemaking. They often want to learn more about current events in Israel and Palestine and to better understand the conflict and possibilities for its resolution. At the same time, many see the complexities and controversies of Israeli-Palestinian issues and wonder where to begin.

Many churches and church organizations have policy positions and statements on the Middle East, mission personnel serving in the region and relationships with Holy Land churches. If you and your congregation or committee are just getting started, look for resources from your church or denomination. Learn more about the Christian community in the Holy Land – who they are, where they live, where they worship and how the conflict is affecting them. Pray for the Christians in the Holy Land. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem – a lasting peace for the two peoples and the three faiths. Using church guidance and resources, take action in support of peacemaking.

The Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) Church Toolkit is designed to assist congregational leaders in planning a worship service, prayer vigil, adult Sunday School series, workshop, panel discussion, advocacy initiative or other community activity by highlighting topics as well as resources for more information.

Your Church Community: Evaluate and Engage

It is important for you as a leader in your church to evaluate your parishioners' and fellow church leaders' understanding of the conflict to help you determine the right strategy for engagement for your community. Consider the following three stages and determine where to begin with your church or group:



1. **Raise Awareness** – this is the first step for congregations and groups that have a basic interest in Middle East peace. Prayer, reflection and worship are key initial steps toward raising awareness.
2. **Educate** – congregations and groups are ready to deepen their understanding through study and dialogue on key issues and topics related to Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking.
3. **Engage in Advocacy** – the churches that are members of the CMEP coalition urge individuals and congregations to view public policy advocacy as a justice activity that includes informed communication with the White House and Congress on important issues.

Planning Suggestions

First, gather support from appropriate clergy, staff or committees and recruit a committee to help plan, organize and publicize the activities. Establish goals, define activities and develop a timeline. As an example:

- Raise awareness by praying for the peace of Jerusalem in the fall;
- Educate by holding four Sunday School sessions during the winter;
- Write advocacy letters to Members of Congress in late winter; and
- Hold advocacy meeting with your Representative during the spring Congressional break.

Using Toolkit Resources

The Toolkit is organized according to the three stages listed above. Organizational and material resources are listed under each stage – Raise Awareness, Educate, Engage in Advocacy. You will need access to the Internet to view most of the recommended resources. Some of the resources will introduce you to other organizations that specialize in certain issues. Others will refer you to materials that will strengthen your understanding of the issues and increase your effectiveness in advocacy with Congress and the Administration.



Things to Consider:

- The awareness, education and involvement of local congregations and church members in Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking vary widely among different communities. While some may have long-held interest, experience and knowledge of the region and conflict, others may have had limited and one-sided exposure.
- Working on Israeli-Palestinian issues has some unique aspects due to the conflict's complexity, legitimate competing claims, global significance and the strong passions it evokes.
- People who visit the area often return to say how they were struck by the fact that one "side" is not clearly right and another wrong.
- Peace advocates do not have to be experts on all the nuances of the issues. However, by using carefully selected, reliable resources and guidance, peace advocates CAN be credible and effective.
- Those who take action on Israeli-Palestinian peace should have a willingness to continue learning and to keep the hopes and fears of both peoples—Israelis and Palestinians—in their minds and hearts.

About Churches for Middle East Peace

Churches for Middle East Peace is a Washington-based coalition of 22 national churches and agencies – Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant – that maintains an on-going dialogue with Congress, the Administration and the diplomatic community, to advance the concerns, assessments, and advocacy positions of its member churches and church-related organizations.

Churches for Middle East Peace promotes a vision of peace and justice for both peoples through a negotiated solution with two viable states – Israel and Palestine – living side by side within secure and recognized borders and sharing Jerusalem. CMEP is a constructive and balanced voice on Capitol Hill for our member churches, engaging directly with Congress and the Administration and providing educational materials and advocacy guidance to individuals and congregations throughout the country.

Toolkit Information and Resources

RAISE AWARENESS: WORSHIP RESOURCES AND IDEAS

1. Jerusalem Prayer Card:
<http://www.cmep.org/SharedJER/PrayerCard.pdf>
2. Worship Resource: Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem:
http://www.cmep.org/Toolkit/Worship_Resource.pdf
3. Ecumenical Prayer Vigil: <http://www.eappi-us.org/prayer%20vigil.htm>
4. Light a Candle for Peace in the Holy Land: (There are a variety of candles available from the Holy Land through various organizations.)



EDUCATE: TOPICS AND ACTIVITIES FOR CHURCH STUDY GROUPS, COMMITTEES OR COMMUNITY FORUMS

- **Church-Specific Actions and Connections:**

Study of Church Policies: Gather your church's policies on the Middle East conflict. See "Church Websites and On-Line Resources for Middle East Peacemaking" cited in resources section below (you may be able to do this research via the internet or contact your church's headquarters and see if they can mail you the materials). Discuss these policies and their ramification for your engagement in Israeli-Palestinian peace.

Build on Your Church's Connections: Find out if your church has mission personnel in the Holy Land. Learn about the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel: www.eappi.org and Christian Peacemaker Teams: <http://www.cpt.org/>. Look for opportunities to hear from them and others with first-hand experience of living and working there. Connect with others in your area that are working on this issue to build awareness and advocacy through local churches and communities.

Discuss CMEP's Positions: Churches for Middle East Peace is a coalition of 22 Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant churches and church agencies that work together on issues related to the Arab-Israeli conflict and other issues in the region. For a variety of policy statements, letters and analysis that could be discussed go to: www.cmep.org.

Holy Land Christians: Raise awareness of the indigenous Christians in the Holy Land—the problems they face and ways to support the community and their institutions. There are a variety of books available, written about and by Palestinian Christians, that could be discussed.

- Palestinian Christian sites: <http://www.cmep.org/sites.htm>.
Bethlehem Besieged: Stories of Hope in Times of Trouble, Mitri Raheb (Fortress Press, 2004)
- *Who Are the Christians in the Middle East?*, Betty Jane Bailey and J. Martin Bailey (Eerdmans 2003)
- *Christians and a Land Called Holy*, Charles P. Lutz and Robert O. Smith (Fortress Press, 2006)
- *Witnessing for Peace: In Jerusalem and the World*, Munib Younan (Fortress Press, 2003)
- *We Belong to the Land*, Elias Chacour (Harper Collins, 1990); Also see *Blood Brothers* (1984)



Holy Land Trips: Consider organizing a trip to the Holy Land. For ideas and resources go to: <http://www.holylandresources.net/>, a website run by author Rev. Dr. Betty Jane Bailey.

Religious Fundamentalism and Christian Zionism: Discuss the problems created by growing fundamentalisms in all three monotheistic faith traditions, particularly the detrimental effect of Christian Zionism on the indigenous Palestinian Christians and on peace efforts here in the US. Emphasize the positive contribution of recent Evangelical Christian peacemaking efforts.

- *When Religion Becomes Evil*, Kimball, Charles (Harper, 2002)
- "Christian Commitment to Peacemaking is Distorted by Christian Zionists", Corinne Whitlatch, CMEP's June 2003 newsletter: <http://www.cmepe.org/newsletter/2003June.htm>
- "Christian Zionism: An Historical Analysis and Critique", John Hubers, Reformed Church in America: <http://images.rca.org/docs/synod/ChristianZionism.pdf>
- Evangelical Peacemaking Initiatives: <http://www.esa-online.org/Display.asp?Page=PalestineIsraelLetter>

● **Inter-Group Relations and Connecting with Peace Supporters:**

Hear the Pain: The Israeli-Palestinian conflict evokes strong emotion among many people, especially in the Jewish and Arab/Palestinian communities here in the United States. It is important to recognize the pain and fear of both peoples and to listen with compassion. Consider inviting local Jews and Arabs to talk about their experiences and feelings about the conflict. The emphasis should be on listening and not debate.

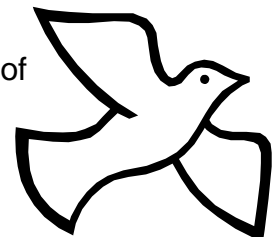
- Dialogue Resources: <http://www.compassionatelistening.org/>, <http://www.thedialogueproject.org/>
- "Shared Histories: A Palestinian-Israeli Dialogue", Paul Scham (Left Coast Press, 2005)

Find Common Ground: Discuss the viewpoints of leading Israelis, Palestinians and other experts on developments related to Israeli-Arab peace. Some websites that provide a regular exchange of ideas and perspectives include Bitterlemons (<http://www.bitterlemons.org/>) and Common Ground News Service (www.commongroundnews.org).

Jewish and Arab American Voices for Peace: Invite Jewish- and Arab- American supporters of a two-state solution to show the breadth of support among Jewish and Arab communities for peace or to talk individually about the work they are doing. CMEP's allies in Washington include: Americans for Peace Now, the American Task Force on Palestine, the Arab American Institute, Brit Tzedek v'Shalom and the Israel Policy Forum. Links: <http://www.cmepe.org/sites.htm>.

Israeli and Palestinian Peacemakers: Discuss the work of Israeli and Palestinian groups and individuals who work non-violently for peace. A non-profit organization called Just Vision has created a catalogue of Israeli and Palestinian peacemakers on their website as well as a documentary film called Encounter Point that can be used as a resource. Go to: www.justvision.org and download http://www.cmepe.org/Toolkit/CMEP_Just_Vision_Guide.pdf for guidance on using the film in your community. Also see in resource section below, "Organizations Related to Israeli-Palestinian Peacemaking" for additional ideas or go to <http://www.allmep.org/members.php>.

Interreligious Cooperation for Peace: Discuss and become involved in the work of the National Interreligious Initiative for Peace in engaging Jews, Christians and Muslims to promote an active U.S. role in peacemaking. Go to: <http://www.nili-mideastpeace.org/>.



- **Issue Focus:**

Search for Peace: A thirty minute documentary film, "Search for Peace in the Middle East", by Landrum Bolling provides a current and balanced overview of the conflict. It reveals the hopes and fears of Israelis and Palestinians, explores the issues that still divide them and describes a broad common ground of yearning for peace, pointing the way toward a resolution of the conflict that meets the needs of both societies. To obtain the DVD, go to www.fmep.org or email info@fmep.org.

Two-State Solution: The internationally recognized resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a two-state solution where two viable states-Israel and Palestine- live side-by-side in peace and security. The need for a win-win solution that is in the best interest of Israelis and Palestinians should be emphasized. Read and discuss the Geneva Accords or Clinton Parameters. A list of the recent peace initiatives that propose a two-state solution can be found at: <http://www.cmep.org/documents/documents.htm>.



The Use of Violence: The use of violence has damaged hopes for peace and it is imperative that both sides move beyond revenge and toward reconciliation. Discuss the necessity for an end to the violence and a resolution of the conflict through negotiations. Consider offering prayers for the thousands of Israelis and Palestinians that have died in the conflict and/or look at the work of the Parent's Circle, a group of Israeli and Palestinian parents who have lost children in the violence and work together for peace. For information go to: <http://www.theparentscircle.com/>.



Jerusalem: The city has great religious and political significance to Israelis and Palestinians and to Jews, Christians and Muslims worldwide. Churches for Middle East Peace call for a shared Jerusalem that respects the human, political and religious rights of both peoples and the three faiths. See CMEP's Shared Jerusalem Resource Center for materials to discuss: <http://www.cmep.org/SharedJER/Resource.htm>.

Separation Barrier and Settlements: The route of the separation barrier and continued Israeli settlement expansion are having detrimental effects on the daily lives of Palestinians, the status of Jerusalem and a viable two-state solution.

- Separation barrier: "The Dividing Wall" DVD by the Mennonite Central Committee <http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/resourcecentre/ResourceView/18/6318>
- Settlements: Peace Now, an Israeli/Jewish-American organization, conducts extensive research: www.peacenow.org as well as the Foundation for Middle East Peace: www.fmep.org.
- "Sacred Space Denied: Bethlehem and the Wall", Peter Nagle, 2005 DVD; To obtain the film email: friendsofbethlehem@fastmail.fm.

The Situation of Palestinian Christians: CMEP has a special connection to the Palestinian Christians while working for a positive future for all the peoples of the Holy Land. As a small and dwindling minority, Christians are acutely affected by the economic and political instability caused by the ongoing conflict. See: CMEP's FAQ's on Palestinian Christians: http://www.cmep.org/documents/FAQs_Situation_Palestinian_Christians.htm and Senate Letter on Palestinian Christians and Peace Process: http://www.cmep.org/press/2007Dec21_Bond-Rockefeller_Letter.htm.



Participate in CMEP advocacy initiatives, including action alerts and sign-on letters, and organize meetings with your Representative or Senators. Resources are listed below and go to www.cmep.org for current issues.

Join CMEP's Grassroots Advocacy Email Network: <http://www.cmep.org/Forms/contact.html>

- Advocacy Tips: http://www.cmep.org/Toolkit/Advocacy_Tips.pdf
- How to Get Your Message Heard by Washington Policymakers: http://www.cmep.org/Toolkit/How_to_Get_Your_Message_Heard.pdf
- Instructions for Holding a Meeting at a Representative or Senator's Local office: [Instructions for Lobby Mtg and Advocacy Tips.pdf](#)
- Government Contacts: <http://www.cmep.org/GovContacts.html>

MIDDLE EAST AND US POLICY OVERVIEW:

1. CMEP newsletters over the years have covered a variety of topics related to US-Middle East relations: <http://www.cmep.org/Policy/policy.htm>.
2. *The Middle East* published by Congressional Quarterly (9th edition) is a comprehensive and well-regarded reference book that provides a balanced, informative, and readable explanation of Middle East affairs with considerable emphasis on U.S. policy.
3. Timeline of the Arab-Israeli Conflict: <http://www.cmep.org/documents/Timeline.htm>.

CMEP TOOLKIT RESOURCES:

1. Raise Awareness:
 - a. Jerusalem Prayer Card: http://www.cmep.org/Toolkit/Prayer_Card.pdf
 - b. Worship Resource: Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem: http://www.cmep.org/Toolkit/Worship_Resource.pdf
 - c. Ecumenical Prayer Vigil for Peace in the Middle East: http://www.cmep.org/Toolkit/Ecumenical_Prayer_Vigil.pdf
2. Educate:
 - a. Church Websites and On-Line Resources for Middle East Peacemaking: http://www.cmep.org/Toolkit/Church_Resources.pdf
 - b. Organizations Related to Israeli-Palestinian Peacemaking: <http://www.cmep.org/Toolkit/Organizations.pdf>
 - c. Timeline of the Arab-Israeli Conflict: <http://www.cmep.org/documents/Timeline.htm>
3. Engage in Advocacy:
 - a. Advocacy Tips: http://www.cmep.org/Toolkit/Advocacy_Tips.pdf
 - b. Instructions for Holding a Meeting at a Representative or Senator's Local office: [Instructions for Lobby Mtg and Advocacy Tips.pdf](#)
 - c. How to Get Your Message Heard by Washington Policymakers: http://www.cmep.org/Toolkit/How_to_Get_Your_Message_Heard.pdf

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