



CHRISTIANS CALL FOR HOLY LAND PEACE

Dear Friend,

Thank you for your interest in encouraging others to join the Christian Call for Holy Land Peace campaign. By uniting our voices, American Christians are sending a strong message to President-elect Obama that we believe Israeli-Palestinian peace must be an immediate priority during his first year in office.

Within this packet, you will find several organizing resources to help you spread the word about this initiative within your local church community including:

- Church Organizing Guide
- Frequently Asked Questions about Holy Land Peace
- Bulletin Inserts for Advent and the New Year
- "Christians Call for Holy Land Peace" Sign-On Sheet
- Sample Clergy Invite Letter
- Completed Sign-On Sheet Submission Form
- Copy of the Ecumenical Letter to President-elect Obama with Leaders' Names

To access these resources, please visit www.cmep.org/letter/resources

While encouraging supporters to sign the letter at the campaign website -- www.cmep.org/letter -- is preferred, we understand that some congregants may not have easy access to the internet. Accordingly, we have produced a supporter sign-on sheet that may circulate among the pews or placed on a table before worship to collect non-electronic signatures. Please review our Church Organizing Guide for additional outreach suggestions.

If you have any questions about the Christian Call for Holy Land Peace campaign, please contact the staff of Churches for Middle East Peace, a coalition of 22 national church bodies, at letter@cmep.org or 202.543.1222.

Let us each hope that this season of change and renewal creates fertile ground for the Obama Administration to provide the needed diplomatic leadership to at last achieve a just and lasting Israeli-Palestinian peace. Thank you again for your peacemaking contributions and your support of this initiative.

In peace,

Carolyn Danckaert
Grassroots Coordinator
Churches for Middle East Peace



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON HOLY LAND PEACE

Why is a just peace so important? What are the characteristics of a durable peace agreement?

The Holy Land is sacred to Jews, Christians and Muslims, but a tragic decades-old conflict over to whom land, resources, and holy sites belong has brought violence and suffering to its two peoples – Israelis and Palestinians. A just peace is essential for the future wellbeing of all the peoples of the Holy Land, including the Christians, who are emigrating due to the difficult political and economic conditions imposed by the conflict. A resolution of the conflict will also strengthen U.S. national security and bolster forces for moderation throughout the region.

For a peace agreement to be durable, it must be negotiated by the two parties, Israelis and Palestinians, and meet the fundamental needs of both. Such an agreement must establish a viable Palestinian state alongside a secure Israel and resolve, through mutual agreement, all unresolved issues including borders, security, refugees, Jerusalem, and water. Unilaterally imposed solutions or partial agreements will not be able to effectively end the conflict.

What is the current status of Holy Land peace efforts?

In November, 2007 President Bush convened an international conference in Annapolis, Maryland and launched a new political process aimed at achieving a two-state peace agreement by the end of 2008. The last time a major peace initiative was attempted was in 2000 under the leadership of President Clinton, but when those talks failed, violence erupted and prospects for peace became dim. Over the last year, Israeli-Palestinian negotiations have been taking place and efforts to improve the situation on the ground undertaken. There has been some progress but it is now clear that a comprehensive agreement will not be reached by the Bush Administration. However, the Annapolis process provides an important groundwork for engagement by the incoming Obama Administration.

Why is U.S. leadership necessary?

History has shown that the two parties cannot achieve peace on their own. The peace treaties between Israel and Egypt and Israel and Jordan were mediated by U.S. Presidents and the Annapolis process was launched by President Bush. The U.S. remains the world's only superpower and on many pressing international issues it is looked to for leadership. Power differentials and lack of trust mean that Israel and the Palestinians need the strong and supportive presence of the United States. Israel needs reassurances about its security that only the U.S. can provide. Palestinians and Arab states will need U.S. assurances that terms of an agreement will be carried out.

Why is it so urgent to resolve the conflict at this time? Is a two-state solution still achievable?

The lack of progress on the peace process has led moderates on both sides to express doubt that a two-state solution can be achieved, yet a two-state peace remains the best option for providing long-term security for Israel and independence for Palestinians in a state of their own. The hope for two sovereign states may soon fade away though, without active U.S. engagement. As the letter notes, "political inertia and the perpetuation of the unbearable status quo" will make achieving a two-state solution increasingly difficult. Israeli and Political leaders have expressed their desire for and commitment to peace, yet strong elements within both societies oppose a negotiated solution. Moreover, the status quo of violence, economic hardship, ongoing settlement activity and the routing of the separation barrier, dampens hope and feeds skepticism, running counter to the need to create a climate conducive to peacemaking.

What is different about the ecumenical sign-on letter to President-elect Obama (www.cmep.org/letter) than other past efforts?

This is the first concerted effort to unite and mobilize such a broad group of both American Christian leaders and congregants – Catholic, Evangelical, Orthodox and Protestant – around a common Holy Land peacemaking goal and at the politically opportune moment of the start of a new U.S. Administration. Moreover, there is a strong basis for peacemaking: polls reveal that majorities on both sides support a negotiated two-state solution; past discussions have created detailed proposals on the most difficult issues, including the status of Jerusalem; and Israeli, Palestinian and American leaders have increasingly come to realize that a two-state deal is in their respective interests. What is needed now is political will, which is why support from constituents is so important.

This resource was created by Churches for Middle East Peace, a coalition of 22 national church bodies. For more information about CMEP, please visit: www.cmep.org. To add your name to the Ecumenical Christian Letter to President-elect Obama urging him to make Israeli-Palestinian peace an immediate priority, visit: www.cmep.org/letter.



CHRISTIANS CALL FOR HOLY LAND PEACE

"Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem"

PSALM 122:6

During this Advent season, when we anticipate the miracle of Christmas, we are reminded that nothing is impossible with God. We renew our hopes that Israelis and Palestinians can live at peace and that Jerusalem can one day soon become a powerful symbol of hope and coexistence for the region and the world.

The peoples of the Holy Land, including the dwindling Christian community, yearn for a just peace and deserve our active support. American Christian leaders and congregants – Catholic, Evangelical, Orthodox and Protestant – around the country are coming together to pray for the peace of Jerusalem and urge President-elect Obama to make Israeli-Palestinian peace an immediate priority.

Join Christian Leaders: Sign the Ecumenical Letter to President-elect Obama on Holy Land Peace

View the letter's signatories, explore our church organizing resources and add your name at:
www.cmep.org/letter

The deadline for signatures is January 16, 2009. The letter, signed by national Christian leaders, was sent to the Obama transition team Dec. 1. The final letter, signed by American Christians nationwide, will be delivered to President Obama during the time of inauguration.

Dear President-elect Obama,

As Christians of the Catholic, Evangelical, Orthodox and Protestant traditions, we are united by a Biblical call to be peacemakers and a commitment to the two peoples of the Holy Land who yearn for a just peace. As Americans, we urge you, Mr. President, to make achievement of Israeli-Palestinian peace an immediate priority during your first year in office.

The conflict between Israelis and Palestinians has gone on too long. It has caused untold suffering for both sides, created economic hardships, and provided a rallying cry for extremists.

As people of faith and hope, we believe peace is possible. Majorities of both Israelis and Palestinians continue to support a negotiated solution based on two secure and sovereign states as the best way to end this tragic conflict.

In order to achieve a durable peace, your Administration must provide sustained, high-level diplomatic leadership toward the clear goal of a final status agreement. Building on past discussions, we ask you to encourage Israeli and Palestinian leaders to make historic compromises necessary for peace.

Your commitment to working for the establishment of a viable Palestinian state alongside a secure Israel can help strengthen U.S. security and improve stability and relationships throughout the Middle East. We believe that Jerusalem – home to two peoples and three religions – has the potential to become a powerful symbol of hope and coexistence for people across the region and the world.

We know the work for a just peace will not be easy. It will require great courage and resolve, but the risk of inaction is even greater. Without active U.S. engagement, political inertia and perpetuation of the unbearable status quo will make achievement of a two-state solution increasingly difficult. Moreover, we are concerned about the negative impact a further delay will have on the Christian community in the Holy Land, whose numbers continue to decline.

We call on all Christians and people of goodwill to join us in praying for the peace of Jerusalem and in supporting vigorous U.S. diplomatic efforts to secure Middle East peace. Mr. President, as you take up the many challenges facing the United States and the global community, we urge you to work for a better future for all the children of Abraham in the land that is holy to us all.



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In the New Year, a time of renewal and fresh opportunities, we are reminded that nothing is impossible with God. We renew our hopes that Israelis and Palestinians can live at peace and that Jerusalem can one day soon become a powerful symbol of hope and coexistence for the region and the world.

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CHRISTIANS CALL FOR HOLY LAND PEACE

Sign-On Sheet Submission Form

Thank you for supporting the ecumenical call for peace in the Holy Land. Let us each hope that President-elect Obama listens to the united voices of American Christians and makes Israeli-Palestinian peace an immediate priority of his Administration.

Please complete this form and return it along with all completed sign-on sheets.

Date	
Name	
Address	
Phone	
Email	
Church Name	
Church Address	
Denomination	
Comments	

Please return to the address below by January 9, 2009:

**Churches for Middle East Peace
110 Maryland Avenue, NE, #311
Washington, DC 20002**

To contact us with any questions, please email letter@cmep.org or call 202.542.1222



CHRISTIANS CALL FOR HOLY LAND PEACE

Sample message from congregants to ask Priests, Pastors and other heads of ministry to sign on to the Ecumenical Christian letter to President-elect Obama:

Dear **[Insert Church Leader]**,

I am writing to you today to make a personal request for your involvement on the issue of Holy Land peace. I want to ask you to join national Christian leaders, including **[Insert National Church Leader Name]**, and congregants across the country in urging President-elect Obama to make achievement of Israeli-Palestinian peace an immediate priority.

The work for a durable Israeli-Palestinian peace will not be easy, but the risk of inaction is far greater. Without active U.S. engagement, achievement of a two-state solution will become even more difficult. A further delay of peace will also mean continued emigration of the Christian community in the Holy Land.

By adding your name to this important ecumenical Christian letter, you will be amplifying the voice of American Christians in support of efforts by President-elect Obama to finally end this tragic conflict and secure a just peace.

To view the full text of the letter and list of signers and to add your name, please visit:
www.cmep.org/letter.

Furthermore, by supporting this important initiative, you will also encourage others within our church community to join this ecumenical call for peace. Church organizing resources that may be of use to you in spreading this message of peace are available at:
www.cmep.org/letter/resources.

The deadline for signatures is January 16, 2009. The letter signed by national Christian leaders was sent to the Obama transition team on December 1st. The final letter signed by American Christians nationwide will be delivered to President Obama during the time of inauguration.

Thank you for considering this appeal. In closing, I urge you to please take a moment today to join with me and other **[Insert Church Name]** members in joining this call for Holy Land peace. Together, we can renew the hope that Jerusalem will one day soon become a powerful symbol of hope and coexistence for the region and the world.

Best regards,

[Insert Your Name]

Broad Coalition of Christian Leaders Call on Obama To Make Israel-Palestinians Peace an Immediate Priority

(Washington, DC, December 2, 2008) A broad spectrum of American Christian leaders – from Catholic and Orthodox traditions to mainline Protestant, Evangelical and historic African American churches and institutions – have appealed to President-elect Obama to make Israeli-Palestinian peace an immediate priority during his first year in office.

In a December 1 letter, the leaders urged the Obama Administration to “provide sustained, high-level diplomatic leadership toward the clear goal of a final status agreement” that will establish a viable Palestinian state alongside a secure Israel.

The letter notes that a durable peace agreement will help “strengthen U.S. security and improve stability and relationships through the Middle East.” Without active U.S. engagement, the leaders warned that “political inertia and perpetuation of the unbearable status quo will make achievement of a two-state solution increasingly difficult.” The leaders are also concerned about the “negative impact a further delay will have on the Christian community in the Holy Land, whose numbers continue to decline.”

Sending the letter during Advent, a season of hope and expectation in the Christian calendar, the leaders expressed their belief that “Jerusalem – home to two peoples and three religions – has the potential to become a powerful symbol of hope and coexistence for people across the region and the world.”

The leaders called on all Christians to support “vigorous U.S. diplomatic efforts to secure Middle East peace”. The letter is being followed by a broad grassroots campaign aimed at mobilizing American Christian church members nationwide. The final letter signed by both Christian leaders and congregants will be delivered to President Obama during the time of inauguration.

The Rev. Mark S. Hanson, Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, said today, "This letter speaks to the need for the incoming Obama administration to help bring about a peace agreement quickly between Israelis and Palestinians. The opportunity for achieving a two- state solution is narrowing and must be seized now. Further delays will make reaching an agreement much harder and undermine long-term security for both Israelis and Palestinians."

Bishop Howard Hubbard, Chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, said, "This conflict continues to undermine the social, economic and spiritual fabric of the lives of all persons in the region, including Christians who have lived in the Holy Land since the earliest days of our faith. With majorities of both Israelis and Palestinians supporting a durable peace, it is incumbent on their political leaders and our own to do everything possible to help bring about a just peace."

Dr. Joel C. Hunter, Senior Pastor of Northland Church said, “Our faith calls on us to work and pray for peace. It's not about taking one side over the other, it's about seeking justice for both parties. The President-elect can be assured that there are many American Christians who stand ready to support his efforts when it comes to seeking a lasting Israeli-Palestinian peace."

The full text of the letter and list of signers is available at: www.cmep.org/leadersletter.pdf

December 1, 2008

The Honorable Barack Obama
President-elect of the United States
Presidential Transition Team
Washington, DC 20270

Dear President-elect Obama,

As Christians of the Catholic, Evangelical, Orthodox and Protestant traditions, we are united by a Biblical call to be peacemakers and a commitment to the two peoples of the Holy Land who yearn for a just peace. As Americans, we urge you, Mr. President, to make achievement of Israeli-Palestinian peace an immediate priority during your first year in office.

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Sincerely,

Rev. Fr. Mark Arey
Ecumenical Officer
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

The Most Rev. Archbishop Khajag Barsamian
Primate, Diocese of the Armenian Church of
America (Eastern)

Rt. Rev. Wayne Burkette
Moravian Church in America

Tony Campolo
Eastern University, St. Davids, PA

Sr. J. Lora Dambroski, OSF
President, Leadership Conference of Women Religious

Marie Dennis
Director, Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson
General Secretary, Reformed Church in America

Sr. Donna Graham, OSF
President, English Speaking Conference JPIC Council
Franciscan Friars (OFM)

Ken Hackett
President, Catholic Relief Services

The Rev. Mark S. Hanson
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

The Rev. Dr. Stan Haste
Minister for Mission and Ecumenism, Alliance of Baptists

Bishop Howard J. Hubbard
Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

Dr. Joel C. Hunter
Senior Pastor, Northland Church
Member, Executive Committee of the
National Association of Evangelicals

Archbishop Cyril Aphrem Karim
Archdiocese of the Syrian Orthodox Church
for the Eastern USA

The Rev. Dr. Michael Kinnamon
General Secretary
National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA

Rev. Michael E. Livingston
Executive Director
International Council of Community Churches
Immediate Past President, National Council of Churches

Reverend John L. McCullough
Executive Director and CEO, Church World Service

Mary Ellen McNish
General Secretary, American Friends Service Committee

Rev. Dr. A. Roy Medley
General Secretary, The American Baptist Churches

Richard J. Mouw
President, Fuller Theological Seminary

David Neff
Editor in Chief, Christianity Today

Stanley J. Noffsinger
General Secretary
Church of the Brethren

Bishop Gregory Vaughn Palmer
President, The Council of Bishops
The United Methodist Church

Rev. Gradye Parsons
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly
Presbyterian Church, (USA)

Very Rev. Thomas Picton, CSsR
President, Conference of Major Superiors of Men

Dr. Tyrone Pitts
General Secretary
Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.

Bob Roberts, Jr.
Pastor, NorthWood Church, Keller, TX

Leonard Rodgers
Executive Director
Evangelicals for Middle East Understanding

Metropolitan PHILIP (Saliba)
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North
America

Rolando L. Santiago
Executive Director, Mennonite Central Committee U.S.

The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori
Presiding Bishop, The Episcopal Church

Dr. Chris Seiple
President, Institute for Global Engagement

Robert A. Seiple
Former Ambassador-at-Large for
International Religious Freedom

Ronald J. Sider
President, Evangelicals for Social Action

Richard Stearns
President, World Vision, United States

The Rev. John H. Thomas
General Minister and President, United Church of Christ

Constantine M. Triantafilou
Executive Director and CEO
International Orthodox Christian Charities

Joe Volk
Executive Secretary
Friends Committee on National Legislation

Jim Wallis
President, Sojourners

The Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins
General Minister and President
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

The Right Rev. John F. White
Ecumenical and Urban Affairs Officer
African Methodist Episcopal Church