

April 26, 2002

To the Congregations of Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA,

As the violence in the Middle East reaches its most dangerous and destructive level of recent decades, we, members of a church believing in Christ's way of peace, are called to action. What can we do? MCC West Bank service workers and Christian Peacemaker Team members are living in Israel/Palestine and sending daily reports. The MCC Washington and Ottawa offices are closely monitoring the situation and join us in offering these suggestions. We urge you as individuals, and especially as congregations, to respond immediately. If you don't web access, contact staff (see back) for assistance. Here are five suggestions for us as Christians:

Lighting a candle in the darkness...



1 Prayer

We are reassured that the Spirit brings our wordless concerns to God. In our confusion and uncertainty, we can look at peoples' faces in the news, or at maps of Israel and Palestine, and ask God to comfort, to hold, to speak to these people.

Actions

Light a candle to keep beside you at work. Each time you see the candle, be reminded again to hold these people, innocent victims of violence and its perpetrators, in prayer.

Subscribe to the MennoLink Peace.news list for frequent prayer requests from Alain Epp Weaver of MCC West Bank. These are concrete, current requests that put needs and persons together with the news. To subscribe see www.MennoLink.org

See the MCC web site, <http://www.mcc.org/middleeast-crisis/> for prayers.

2 Corporate Worship

Worship is the place we recognize the sovereignty of God in our lives, above all other loyalties. To bring our concerns to worship recognizes God's place in our lives and the connection between God and all aspects of our lives and world.

Actions

Create a worship center in your congregation where people can gather to pray for the people of Israel/Palestine and for the leaders who are making life and death decisions. Include photographs, maps, recent writings of MCC West Bank and CPT Hebron, candles, and crafts from Ten Thousand Villages made in Israel/Palestine.

Develop and share worship resources with your congregation as a way to bring your concerns to God. If you create materials you are willing to share, please send them to SusanML@MennoniteUSA.org

3 Advocacy

As a missional people aligned with God's purposes in the world, our concern for God's healing and God's justice calls us to speak on behalf of others. Because of what we

are for—what God is for—we speak when war and violence cycle to greater levels. God calls all people and all things to reconciliation under God's purposes of healing, hope, and restoration. We choose to join God in that call.

Actions

Please see our web page about advocacy: <http://peace.mennolink.org/advocacy.html>

Write letters to your government using the points suggested below to guide you. Faxes are preferable to e-mail messages, as they are more likely to be read. Make sure to include your complete mailing address.

Contact information

CANADA

- Prime Minister's Office Fax: 613-941-6900
e-mail PM@parl.gc.ca
- Foreign Minister's Office Fax: 613-996-3443
e-mail Graham.B@parl.gc.ca
- your own Member of Parliament
e-mail Last.name.First.initial@parl.gc.ca

UNITED STATES

- President George W. Bush Fax: 202-456-2461
e-mail: president@whitehouse.gov
- your senator or representative: See advocacy web page (above) or call the Capitol switchboard: 202-224-3121

General points

Encourage your government to urge all parties to enter immediate negotiations, lay down their weapons, and end the violence.

Urge your government to encourage the Palestinian authority to exercise its influence to stop suicide bombings that can't achieve the peace desired by all.

Urge your government to encourage the Israeli government to withdraw its military forces from Palestinian communities and allow the people to bury their dead, care for their wounded, feed their families, and resume their lives.

Urge all parties to address not just the symptoms but the roots of the current violence: namely, the

... beseeching the Prince of Peace



illegal Israeli occupation of lands taken in the 1967 war, the settlements built on them, and the plight of Palestinian refugees dating to 1948.

Other positive steps: insist that Israel release Arafat and not re-occupy Gaza and the West Bank; support the introduction of unarmed international monitors; give more visibility to the Arab proposal adopted in Beirut; support a more significant role for the U.N. in moving toward the vision outlined in the Arab proposal.

Encourage governments to build healthy relationships between communities at home and around the world.

Points for Canadian citizens

Thank the Canadian government for its recent statements in support of ending the violence in the Middle East, withdrawal by Israel from the occupied territories, and condemnation of the military invasion of Palestinian territories these past weeks.

Urge the Canadian government to exercise its influence to encourage the Bush Administration to bring both parties to negotiation and to halt the violence.

Urge the Canadian government to continue to act as a strong partner within the United Nations and to act as an international partner and presence to bring stability in this volatile situation.

Name the occupation of Palestinian territories as illegal under the Fourth Geneva Convention and in accordance with relevant UN Security Council resolution 242 & 338, which call on Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories in exchange for peace.

Urge that Canada continue to be an international presence for peace-building.

Points for U.S. citizens

Thank President Bush for sending Colin Powell to the region for meetings with Arafat and Sharon.

Focus on how the U.S. role is contributing to the spiraling cycle of violence. The one-sided U.S. approach contributes to the Palestinian sense of injustice and hopelessness, and is emboldening Israel's military response.

Urge President Bush to take an "even-handed" approach in addressing this issue. His repeated endorsement of Prime Minister Sharon's inflammatory

statements and military responses, while denouncing President Arafat and demanding that he do more, does not create an environment for constructive negotiations.

4 Learn More

We must seek information from our brothers and sisters living in Israel and Palestine and learn about their religions and worldviews to better understand current events.

Actions

Seek information from these web sites we trust:

- Christian Peacemaker Teams has daily updates from their unit in Hebron, West Bank: <http://www.prairienet.org/cpt/>
- Mennonite Central Committee: <http://www.mcc.org/middleeastcrisis/>
- Seniors for Peace: CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM: SOME REFLECTIONS by Marlin Jeschke Professor Emeritus, Goshen College, Goshen, IN <http://seniorspace.mennonite.net/mjeschke.html>
- American Friends Service Committee: <http://www.afsc.org/>
- Mennonite Mission Network's Third Way Café has comments from the MCC Washington and United Nation offices: <http://www.thirdway.com/ww/>

Gather a group who seeks to learn more and share information.

5 Contribute time and money

Both Mennonite Central Committee and Christian Peacemaker Teams have people living and working for peace in Israel/Palestine and accept contributions. Mennonite Central Committee is providing food. Christian Peacemaker Teams sent an experienced emergency delegation and needs extra funds to cover expenses.

Actions

Send contributions to Christian Peacemaker Teams, PO Box 6508, Chicago IL 60608, and Mennonite Central Committee, 21 S. 12th St., PO Box 500, Akron PA 17501-0500.

Set aside a specific daily time to pray, educate yourself, and advocate.



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