

PIN Bulletin For Local Organizers

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Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?



Organizing for Effective PIN Local Action under the Umbrella of EPF

As a new year of activism for Palestinian human rights begins, PIN invites you to consider the benefits of organizing as an EPF Chapter or a Peace Partner Parish. To explore those benefits, the Bulletin offers this Q&A with EPF's Executive Director, Melanie Merkle Atha.



We caught up with Melanie in her mobile office, a truck named Miranda. Melanie and husband Steven travel from diocese to diocese around the country for EPF, visiting Chapters and Peace Partner Parishes. In this photo, Melanie and Miranda visit with EPF's former Exec. Director, the Rev. Allison Liles. During the pandemic, personal visits have been curtailed

but the vaccine brings hope for visitations to resume.

Editor: Melanie, how many EPF Chapters and Peace Partner Parishes (PPP) are there and where are they?

Melanie: EPF has 82 Chapters and PPPs. A link to our directory, arranged by Diocese, is here: <https://epfnational.org/epf-chapters-peace-partners/> The directory helps you locate fellow activists near you, for networking and action.

E: What exactly is a Chapter and what do they do?

M: An EPF Chapter is a regionally based group which works on local peace initiatives within their parish and communities as well as on national and international issues. Chapters sponsor and co-sponsor prayer and public witness events such as peace vigils, liturgies, service projects, film screenings, hosting speakers, and participating in demonstrations. EPF has 27 Chapters.

E: And Peace Partner Parishes?

M: An EPF Peace Partner Parish is an institution (congregation, diocese, seminaries, or worshipping community) which is dedicated to social justice and is seeking to grow its justice and peace ministries with the support of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship National. EPF has 55 PPPs.

E: Do all Chapters and PPPs focus on identical issues or does advocacy vary?

M: Each Chapter or PPP is autonomous. Each chooses the issues on which they advocate as they are led by the Holy Spirit and as makes sense for the concerns facing their community. Most focus on two or three issues, and often they choose one local or state-wide issue, such as death penalty abolition, unique environmental problems, or human trafficking, as well as one national or international issue, such as abolition of nuclear weapons, gun violence prevention, or Palestinian human rights.

E: If there is no Chapter or PPP in my diocese, what do I do?

M: New Chapters and PPPs are enthusiastically welcomed. In order to form a Chapter, one simply needs to gather as few as five like-minded justice advocates and let EPF National know (epfactnow@gmail.com). PPPs are organized with Vestry approval. Annual dues for PPPs and Chapters are \$250.

E: What are the benefits of membership?

M: The primary benefit is connection with a network of people and parishes dedicated to social justice ministry -- our Action Group networks -- which include Anti-Racism, Gun Violence Prevention, Abolition of the Death Penalty, Environmental Justice, Palestine-Israel Network, Gender Violence Prevention, Advocacy in Support of Refugees and Immigrants, and our longstanding Anti-War Efforts (including support for Conscientious Objectors, Abolition of Nuclear Arms, and Abolition of Drone Warfare).

Other benefits include:

****A listing in EPF's Chapter and PPP Directory (see above)**

****Access to the EPF Constant Contact account to send engaging group emails**

****Consultation time with EPF's leadership on your peace and justice work**



****A beautiful poster of the Bp. Paul Jones Icon, created by the Rev. Canon Robert Two Bulls for EPF**

****For PPPs, a certificate identifying your congregation as a Peace Partner Parish, with use of our logo on your parish website**

****Weekly *Peace Out* newsletter, highlighting our work across the country, regularly featuring individual Chapters and PPPs. Please send your news to us at epfactnow@gmail.com so we can help promote your justice work in *Peace Out*, on our website and on our EPF Facebook page**

****Access to our online preaching series, which is tied to the lectionary and will highlight EPF social justice ministries**

****A visit from our Executive Director, who travels the country in support of EPF National and our Chapters and PPPs. When in your neighborhood, the E.D. is available for leading forums, preaching, participating in demonstrations and witness, recruiting for new ministries, and educating people about our Gospel call to social justice advocacy. Otherwise, she can be available for Zoom or other virtual programming**

****Access to our curricula for certain of our social justice ministries, as you have a need for adult Christian education classes and community education. The EPF Store offers our new "Justice is Love in Action" T-shirts and other items which make EPF visible in the world**

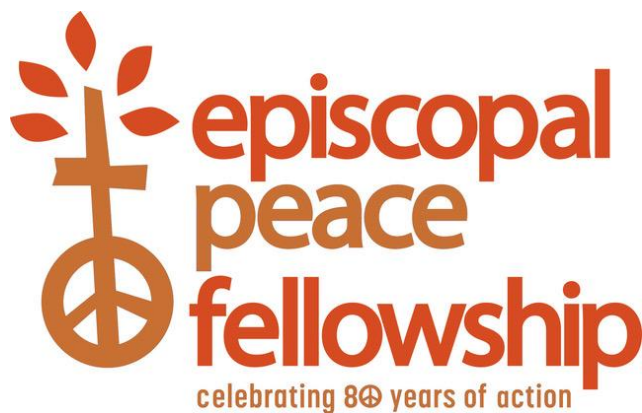
E: What innovations has EPF put in place to meet the challenges of COVID-19?

M: Along with many institutions, EPF has discovered the value of Zoom for connecting and organizing. New for 2021 are our monthly Chapter and PPP Zoom check-ins. The Executive Director and one or more of our action group conveners, committee chairs or National Executive Council (NEC) members will have "office hours" where members can join us. Our first meeting will be on Friday, February 26 at 2:00 pm Eastern, at which time we will poll all those assembled to find a standing date and time for a monthly session. Each monthly agenda will vary by the needs of those assembled and the social justice issue which is being highlighted for action. Designed to be mostly a listening session, we will be keen to hear what our Chapters and PPPs are working on and on which they need support from EPF National. As well, we will highlight any national initiatives in which our members might wish to participate.

E: Readers of EPF-PIN's Local Organizing Bulletin have a special interest in advocacy for Palestinian human rights. What can you tell us

about that?

M: In EPF, the Palestine Israel Network is a tightly organized and effective Action Group which is deeply devoted to creating awareness around the ongoing occupation of Palestine and the plight of the Palestinian people. Across the nation, we have significant presence of individuals, Chapters and Peace Partners dedicated to this work in the dioceses in Washington, West Texas, Western North Carolina, California, Chicago, Connecticut, Los Angeles, Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Central New York, Rochester, Rio Grande, North Carolina, Oregon, Olympia and Virginia. To be connected with advocates in your Diocese, or if you wish to begin a Chapter or Peace Partner Parish in your community, please email Linda Gaither (lgaither@sonofyork.com) or Harry Gunkel (harry.gunkel@gmail.com), who are the conveners of our Palestine Israel Network Action Group.



Thank you, Melanie, for this informative Q&A and the various possibilities for networking and affiliating as Chapters or PPPs that you have shared with us. In 2021 we hope Miranda pulls into many of our neighborhoods !

[Visit our website](#)

