

PIN Bulletin For Local Organizers

Volume 23, May 2021

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



St. Thomas parishioner gets acquainted with young students at K-12 Arab Evangelical Episcopal School (AEES) - Ramallah, West Bank

The Many Ways to Organize as Episcopalians on Behalf of Palestinian Human Rights

Previous editions of the PIN Bulletin have featured models for organizing that work: EPF Chapters, Peace Partner Parishes, local interdenominational advocacy groups, project-centered organizing such as yearly Film Festivals.

Today we shine the light on another model : The Bishop's Committee for the Holy Land in the Diocese of Olympia.

Mary J. Pneuman, a long-time member of the Bishop's Committee, has written an account of the group's mission, growth and evolving emphases through the years. As Mary says, the goal is "to share with others what we have learned regarding organizational issues and learn of opportunities to work more closely with other dioceses in ECUSA as we pursue our common mission."

With deep thanks to Mary and the Committee, PIN is very pleased to share this with our readers, beginning with an Introduction by the Rt. Rev. Gregory H. Rickel, Bishop of the Diocese of Olympia.



Bishop's Committee for Justice and Peace in the Holy Land: Our Mission—Past and Present

For many years the Diocese of Olympia has had a special relationship with the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem. Parishes in this Diocese have become sister parishes with parishes in Israel and the West Bank. In Israel, as well as in the West Bank and Gaza, there are Episcopal educational and medical institutions that people and parishes in our Diocese not only financially support but also often visit. I have personally visited many of these institutions both in the West Bank and Gaza.

Given this history, it should not surprise anyone that we have, in this Diocese, an Episcopal Bishop's Committee for the Holy Land. The members of this committee meet monthly to reflect upon how we, the Diocese of Olympia, might better support not only our fellow Episcopalians, but the whole Christian community of the Holy Land and all the people of Israel/Palestine: Christians, Muslims and Jews alike, in their struggle to live together in shalom, salaam, justice and peace. I offer my thanks to the members of the Bishop's Committee for their continued commitment to human rights and equal justice for sisters and brothers in the Holy Land.

The Rt. Rev. Gregory H. Rickel, VIII Bishop of Olympia



The Bishop's Committee for Justice and Peace in the Holy Land is committed to a future in which everyone in the Holy Land enjoys security, justice and human rights. We work toward this future by raising awareness through prayer, education and advocacy. We partner in this effort with people and groups of all faiths. Our committee was established in 2000 to implement the newly formed companion relationship between the Diocese of Olympia (D of O) and the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem (D of J) by means of companion relationships, education, advocacy and prayer. In the

beginning, it was hoped that the creation of a formal program of partnership between the parishes of the two dioceses would develop closer connections with our Episcopal brothers and sisters, but lasting inter-parish relationships proved difficult to maintain. Instead, a more sustainable model of companionship has evolved through the creation of long-term relationships between our own parishes and the educational and health ministries of the D of J, and this has led to the development of personal friendships as well as funding support.

The relationship between the two dioceses has also been strengthened through two-way visitations of clergy and laity, committee members who volunteered time in the schools and health institutions in the Diocese of Jerusalem, a program of pilgrimage, and encouragement and organization of pilgrimage. Our "Come and See" pilgrimages have always included visits to educational and health facilities in the D of J, and each year for many years Bishop Greg Rickel has led clergy and seminarians on pilgrimages that include visits to these institutions.



The Diocese of Jerusalem presently oversees the operation of 25 parishes, 13 schools, and 7 hospitals, clinics, and rehabilitation services, with special schools for the blind and deaf in Israel, Palestine, Jordan and Lebanon. Its schools provide education for approximately 6000 students from pre-Kindergarten to grade 12. We maintain a close connection with the American

Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem (AFEDJ), a nonpolitical, nonsectarian organization dedicated to raising financial support for these institutions. All comers are served, regardless of religion, ethnicity or ability to pay. In this photo, children learn in braille at AES (Arab Episcopal School) integrated K-10 school for children – blind, low and normal vision - in Irbid, Jordan.



A few years ago, a decision was made to broaden our membership to include other denominations, and our committee is presently composed of sixteen members (four clergy and twelve laypersons representing Episcopal, Lutheran, Presbyterian and Catholic denominations). Many of our members have dual

affiliations, and through them we collaborate with the interdenominational Friends of Sabeel North America (FOSNA), Kairos USA, Churches for Middle East Peace, AFEDJ, and Palestine Israel Network/Episcopal Peace Fellowship (EPF PIN) as well as a number of

local advocacy groups such as Mideast Focus Ministry at St. Mark's Cathedral, Kairos Puget Sound Coalition, the Rachel Corrie Foundation and Jewish Voice for Peace. Through this network we have teamed up or helped to underwrite both educational and political advocacy. Mideast Focus sponsors a popular and thoughtful film series which can be obtained by requesting a link from <https://saintmarks.org/justice/mideast-focus-film-series/> and the Corrie Foundation has been instrumental in offering political advocacy training along with opportunities to meet with local legislators. All Bishop's Committee members have seen for themselves the "facts on the ground."

Through the years, our educational program has consisted of workshops at our yearly diocesan conventions and special seminars featuring prominent Christian and Jewish leaders, academics and writers who have first-hand experience and understanding of over 50 years of Israeli occupation of Palestine. These include, among others, Rev. Naim Ateek, Jonathan Kuttub, Jeff Halper, Ilan Pappé, Miko Peled and Mark Braverman. We maintain an active website which is an interfaith resource holylandjustice.org for news and information about the Holy Land and offers current action alerts and posting of local events.

Political advocacy has become a primary objective of our work in the last five years. We have met with US representatives from the congressional districts represented by our members as well as with state senators and representatives, recently on issues related to BDS and the imposition of state laws that penalize organizations and individuals that support boycott as a non-violent means to put economic pressure on Israel to end the occupation. Most recently, as part of the ongoing "No Way to Treat a Child" campaign, meetings have been arranged to urge the support of current House Resolution 2590, defending human rights of children and Palestinian families by opposing military detention of Palestinian children and unlawful seizure and appropriation of Palestinian land and homes.

In November, we are planning a one-day seminar entitled "A New Way to Look at Israel." The focus for this general audience seminar will be to show the destructive impact of the colonial settlement and military occupation of Palestine, examine the role of the US in enabling and maintaining Israeli supremacy and the subjugation of nearly six million Palestinians, and consider how the US might effectively promote human rights and justice for all. Due to Covid uncertainties, we are working on a presentation that will be both "live" and "virtual."

As we move ahead, we look forward to collaboration with PIN. We welcome the opportunity to share with others what we have learned regarding organizational issues and learn of opportunities to work more closely with other dioceses in ECUSA as we pursue our common mission.

Mary J. Pneuman
Member, Bishop's Committee

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