

# *PIN Bulletin For Local Organizers*

Volume 49, August 2023

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



## **A New EPF Chapter is Born, with a Focus on Palestine/Israel**

### **Wisdom School and EPF Unite in Vermont** by John Heermans, PIN activist

**The Rock Point Wisdom Community** was formed in 2016 following the election of Donald Trump and continues to meet for prayer and contemplative practices following methods and teachings of Cynthia Bourgeault and other contemplative teachers. For more information: [www.wisdomwaypoints.org](http://www.wisdomwaypoints.org)

The idea of forming an Episcopal Peace Fellowship chapter as part of the wisdom school was born following a talk last year by Melanie Merkle Merkle Atha, Exec. Director of EPF at the time, to a wisdom school gathering at Rock Point in Burlington.

The first activity of our chapter, **EPF Northern Vermont**, was to support the showing of the film "Seeing Through the Wall" in Burlington by attending and donating to cover some costs. About 35 people viewed the powerful film and stayed for the panel discussion. One of the most positive outcomes was that Amnesty Vermont showed up, which marks the beginning of a budding coalition between **Vermonters for Justice in Palestine (VTJP), Amnesty Vermont and EPF Northern Vermont.**

The first official meeting of the EPF chapter occurred in July in my back yard under a maple tree. What will be the relationship of the Wisdom School and the new EPF chapter?

- The mantra of Wisdom Schools is clear: "if you want to change the world, change yourself." Activist groups sometimes refer to



this approach as navel gazing. EPF, for example, draws inspiration from the lives of Martin Luther King, Gandhi, John Woolman, Dorothy Day, Simone Weil, and that radical of radicals, Jesus. Prayer is the foundation that leads to a shift from "self-centeredness" to "reality-centeredness" (*Blessed are the Consumers*, Sallie McFague).

- McFague is saying we may ground ourselves in contemplative prayer, but in our world today, we need "all hands on deck" to stand side-by-side with the next generation to address global poverty, global warming and liberation for the oppressed.
- Some in the group voiced a concern that the energy required by the EPF chapter to make it viable could be a distraction from the wisdom school practices and most people are already involved in different causes and not necessarily drawn to the Palestine/Israel issue. The relation between contemplation and action will no doubt be an ongoing topic.
- As a follow on to the film, John proposed joining VTJP and Amnesty to support a national movement put forth by the Quakers to create "Apartheid Free Communities" (click [here](#) to view petition). Burlington is our candidate for the first "Apartheid Free Community" in Vermont.
- EPF Northern Vermont decided unanimously to endorse the campaign and take action: solicit endorsements, esp. from Burlington churches, participate in the signature campaign, participate in a media/communications campaign.
- In addition, the chapter is exploring the possibility of submitting a resolution to the Diocese of Vermont Convention, in support of the Apartheid Free Communities campaign.



**Photo:** EPF and Amnesty collected over 938 signatures over three Saturdays by tabling at the Burlington Farmers Market.

#### Final Thoughts from John on EPF Northern Vermont:

\* In Vermont, groups like Migrant Justice, Black Lives Matter, Brady, etc. are coming together to support each other in various ways. By joining forces with



Amnesty and VTJP on the Palestinian issue, we are also joining forces with these other groups to address social justice challenges.

\* Our new chapter might be a small break-through in bridging the gap between the "self-centeredness" of wisdom communities and the "reality-centeredness" of peace and social justice movements.

\* We may discover that diving into the rough and tumble world of social justice is not only living up to a responsibility to alleviate suffering in the world, but also a contemplative practice every bit as transformative as centering prayer, chanting, movement, and lectio divina.

## MORE SUMMER ADVOCACY IN DIOCESE OF SAN DIEGO

PIN activist Melissa Yarbray reports from  
St. Margaret's Parish in Palm Desert, CA:

**ANNUAL SUMMER MOVIE NIGHT AUGUST 23, 6:00 PM  
VOICES FOR PEACE IN THE HOLY LAND**

**"The Present" on Netflix**



*Checkpoint for Palestinians heading to work near Jerusalem. Givat Ze'ev Israeli settlement in background.*

Are you confused about news you hear concerning the Holy Land? Who are the settlers, refugees, indigenous people? Military occupation, settler colonialism or democracy? Why have the Holy Land clergy been asking American Christians to advocate for justice? Where does The Episcopal Church stand on these issues, and what can we do if we are to follow our baptismal vow to seek justice and peace, remembering there can be little peace without justice for all.

Join us for this 2021 Academy Award nominee for a documentary about a family living near Bethlehem. We will relate the above questions to the movie, and review the resolutions of the Episcopal Church at 2022 General Convention including Freedom of Speech and Right to Boycott, our call to action for justice, conditioning military aid, and commitment to raise awareness of the plights of Christian churches in the Holy Land.



## Invitation from our allies at the U.S. Campaign for Palestinian Rights

Register now for the USCPR National Conference

**OCT. 27 6 PM - OCT. 29 3 PM, 2023  
HOUSTON, TEXAS**

Info & Registration: <https://www.uscprconference.org>

*Please note - EPF and EPF PIN are now on a new platform for giving!  
Whether you are a monthly giver or a first time giver, please visit our  
new platform to make your gift. Consider increasing your monthly  
donation to support our efforts for peace and justice.*



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Episcopal Peace Fellowship Palestine Israel Network | 2045 West Grand Ave, Suite B, #40058,  
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