



invest in
peace



The Church of Scotland
World Mission Council



Foreword

We invest so much in war: it is time to invest in peace.

Peace in Israel and Palestine is very important for the peace of the world: much tension and hostility between the Arab world and the West has its roots in the history of Israel and Palestine. Anything that can be done to help peace-making in that tiny, blood-stained wonderful part of the world is precious. Anything that can be done to build peace-making in that part of the world where Jesus said “Blessed are the peace-makers” is precious.

Here is an opportunity for every individual to invest in peace. In this booklet there are invitations to give five pounds of your money or three years of your life. It may be that you would like to write a letter to a politician supporting peace-making; here you will find guidance. It may be that you would like to learn more: here you will find help.

So many people have opinions about the Middle East. The Church of Scotland should be listened to for at least three reasons. The first is a long history of our own people living and working in Israel and Palestine. At present we have five mission partners

there; and we are part of Christian Aid which has been doing wonderful things in that part of the world for years. The second reason is that we have strong and sensitive partnerships with the local Christians in Israel and Palestine and their voices inform everything in this booklet. What a tragedy it is that Christians from abroad can come and go to and from “the Holy Land” and never meet the Christians who live and suffer there. The third reason that this booklet should be read and listened to is that it tries to understand the situation in Israel and Palestine from the point of view of the poorest and the most oppressed.

There is an old rabbinic saying *Ten measures of beauty gave God to the world: nine to Jerusalem and one to the remainder. Ten measures of sorrow gave God to the world: nine to Jerusalem and one to the remainder.* People often wonder if God has a special purpose for Israel and Palestine. I have no doubt the answer is yes: God’s purpose is just and lasting peace. Now is the time to invest in peace.



Andrew McLellan, Convener, World Mission Council

Our commitment

In relation to its work in Israel and Palestine, the 2011 General Assembly of the Church of Scotland agreed to:

- Urge members of the Church to visit, meet and support the Christian community in the Middle East.
- Encourage members to pray for the Presbyterian and other churches in Egypt and the work of the Coptic Evangelical Organisation for Social Services (CEOSS) amongst the least in the society.
- Encourage members to pray for the witness of the Presbyterian and other Churches in Lebanon and Syria.
- Commend the Kairos Palestine document to the whole church.
- Give thanks for Jewish, Christian and Muslim cooperation in upholding the rights of the poor and oppressed in the Middle East and beyond.
- Appreciate the work of the Council in developing its Centres to support the Council's work in the pursuit of justice, peace and reconciliation.
- Commend the Council for seeking to engage every member of the Church of Scotland in support of peacemaking in Israel and Palestine.
- Give thanks for the renewed co-operation between the Council and congregations of the Church of Scotland with Christian Aid, and urge all members to support Christian Aid in expressing solidarity with the world church.

- Give thanks for the 2011 Tearfund Global Poverty Prayer week and commend the use of this resource in 2012 to congregations.
- Thank the Guild for their keen interest and support for the Council's work around the world.
- Encourage congregations and Presbyteries to join in twinning relationships.
- Encourage members to offer for service as Mission Partners.
- Encourage members to volunteer as Ecumenical Accompaniers.
- Urge congregations to be involved in advocacy activities in support of minority Christian communities.
- Give thanks for the HIV Programme and the work of our partners at home and overseas, and re-commit the Church of Scotland to playing its part in response to the pandemic.

Introduction

World Mission Council Reports to the General Assembly have traditionally highlighted the Council's work all over the world. It has often been difficult for people to comprehend it all, and many fasten on to sections dealing with a country they know or a Mission Partner a congregation supports. The Council has decided to focus on specific regions over the next three years, starting this year with the Middle East, to be followed by Asia, then Africa and the Caribbean.

The General Assembly of 2010 instructed the Council to make our report 'Christians in Minority Situations' widely available. This was done in various ways, including a very successful conference with other concerned organisations; items in our WM magazine and in Life and Work; and the wide distribution of a popular copy of the report called 'If one suffers ...' to all congregations and to MSPs, MPs and MEPs. The report has brought much comment and also action ranging from campaigning to developing twinning relationships with Christians living in minority situations.

The Church is called to stand in solidarity with the least in society. The Church of Scotland at home and abroad is taking this injunction seriously. The poor are a gospel priority whether in Scotland or any other place. The World Mission Council is given the task of responding to that call on behalf of the Church of Scotland around the world.

Helping set people free from the oppression of poverty is one of the priorities of the Council. Supporting partners in new initiatives on evangelism; and supporting initiatives for justice, peace and reconciliation in situations of conflict or threat are others. In all that it does, the Council's overarching aim is to emphasise local to local engagement; the building of relationships and friendships between congregations and Presbyteries in Scotland with those of our partners around the world.

The Church of Scotland World Mission Council is committed to giving support – spiritual, moral and practical – wherever we can and within the resources available. The Council does this through engagement with partner churches and other organisations in many countries around the world; through the work of Mission Partners in specific countries; through the HIV Programme; in twinning relationships and through bringing people to Scotland to inform the church at home. It is from our engagement and involvement with our partners that the Council is able to share with the Church in Scotland the realities of every day life for those with whom we are in relationship around the world.

Further information on work with partners in specific countries is available on the Church of Scotland website or by contacting the World Mission Department in the Church Offices. The Council wants to offer members of the Church of Scotland opportunities to become actively involved with the churches of the world and support meaningful engagement with the world church. On pages 35/36 there is a portfolio of options for one particular aspect of our common task. This will give you some ideas about how to be effective, to be active, and to be engaged in doing something in the pursuit of peace with justice for all in Palestine and Israel.



Archbishop Aris, Bishop Munib,
Rev Olav Fykse Tveit,
Father Issa Muslih,
Rev Mitri Raheb,
Patriarch Michel Sabbah
signing Kairos Palestine

Investing in peace

Through our love, we will overcome injustices and establish foundations for a new society both for us and for our opponents. Our future and their future are one. Either (there will be) the cycle of violence that destroys both of us or peace that will benefit both.¹ Kairos Palestine, 2009

Kairos Palestine is a seminal document from the Palestinian Christian community. Launched in Advent 2009, it is subtitled, “A Moment of Truth: a word of faith, hope and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering.” It is not “a theoretical theological study or a policy paper, but is rather a document of faith ...” Its central concern is for a just and peaceable end to the Israeli occupation and an opportunity for the Palestinian people to build a secure and stable state. It points out the mission of the Church is “to speak the Word of God courageously, honestly and lovingly in the local context and in the midst of daily events,” and to “stand alongside” the “oppressed.” (Kairos Palestine 3.4.1) Mark Braverman, an American Jewish voice for justice and peace, welcomed the document, emphasising that “What is needed to bring peace to this land is ... a broad, global social movement that will change the political wind. And it is in the church that this movement will be initiated, led, and grow in strength.”²

Kairos refers to a moment of truth and challenge: God’s own timing for the fulfilment of God’s purpose in history. Famously used in the 1985 Kairos proclamation of the Churches in South Africa, Kairos Palestine seeks common cause with the South African situation. The Kairos Palestine document has been widely disseminated and is helpful in understanding the experience and situation of the Palestinian community, Christian and Muslim. It is also a cry to the world church to stand in solidarity with a minority community of Christians whose lands and livelihoods are threatened through Israeli military power, settler aggrandisement and uninspiring political leadership. The Palestinian Kairos Document issues an invitation, asking the question to Christians around the world: “Are you able to help us get our freedom back, for this is the only way you can help the two peoples attain justice, peace, security and love?” (Kairos Palestine 6.1) It urges Christians to “take a position of truth with regard to Israel’s occupation of Palestinian land.” (Kairos Palestine 6.3)

Our land has a universal mission (Kairos Palestine 2.3)

The world church has been called to stand in solidarity with the Christians of the Middle East, and the Church of Scotland World Mission Council is heeding that call. Bishop Munib Younan of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) addressed the 2010 General Assembly and urged us to “invest in peace”. That cry is taken seriously by the Council which is responding in faith and action with the ELCJHL and other friends in Palestine, Israel, the wider Middle East, and with partners in other contexts and countries around the world for whom the focus on peace is timely.

Peace is of central importance to our work all over the world, but especially in the Middle East. Peace is a necessary condition in allowing all peoples to flourish and develop. Martin Luther King Jr reminded us that “True peace is not merely the absence of tension: it is the presence of justice.”³ True peace requires an entire and dramatic new direction for society. It is about human dignity and wellbeing and opportunities for self and societal development. True peace needs justice.

Naim Ateek, Director of Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Centre, reminds us that the biblical word translated as ‘righteousness’ may also be translated as ‘justice’. He notes: “Many people tend to understand righteousness as having to do with their own personal spiritual life without taking into account their relationship with others. I believe that it is more likely that Jesus, in his historical context, addressing people who were living under occupation, with everything that that entails, was calling for justice. For the Palestinian people then were hungry and thirsty for justice. And this is exactly what our Palestinian people are hungry and thirsty for today.”⁴

“Seek first the kingdom of God and God’s justice.” (Matthew 6:33)

“Blessed are those who are hungry and thirsty for justice, for they shall be filled.” (Matt 5:6)

The distinguished Pakistani economist, Dr Mahbub ul Haq, recognised this essential interconnectedness in founding the UN Human Development Report. He highlighted: “For human security, in the last analysis, is a child that did not die, a disease that did not spread, an ethnic violence that did not explode, a woman who was not raped, a poor person who did not starve, a dissident who was not silenced, a human spirit that was not crushed. Human security ... is a concern with human dignity.”⁵

People created in the image and likeness of God – women, men and children – have the intrinsic right to human security, to justice, to human dignity, to live a life free of violence, disease, malnutrition or poverty. Here we make common cause with Christian Aid, the churches’ agency for humanitarian and development action, as well as with people of all faiths or none, as we seek, and act to achieve, a peaceable world through the eradication of poverty and the realisation of justice, equality, dignity and freedom for all, regardless of faith, gender or nationality.

Working together with Christian Aid is additionally useful in advocacy and campaigning: offering opportunities to vocalise our concerns, and those of our sisters and brothers throughout the world. We continue to encourage churches to see the work of Christian Aid as an integral part of involvement in the world church.

The General Assembly of 2010 instructed the Council to “explore the relationship of Christian Aid to local Christian churches in the Middle East and to report to the Assembly of 2011.” The Council was in communication with Christian Aid and the churches in the Middle East to clarify the relationship. Christian Aid is the relief and development agency of the churches of Great Britain and Ireland, supporting and engaging churches to work together “for a better life for all”. It does not fund core church activities, but has a commitment to work with the churches, church-related bodies and the ecumenical family when working on specific projects which fulfil Christian Aid’s requirements and have common values and purpose. It is therefore able to offer assistance for specific projects which are clearly defined and time limited.

Symbol of peace and sign of conflict (Kairos Palestine 1.1.8)

The State of Israel was recognised by the international community as a haven after the devastating acts against Jewish people in the Holocaust. It was a political and humanitarian response to events of truly incomprehensible proportions. It is important to state our support for a secure and democratic State of Israel where all citizens enjoy equal rights under the law. Such a State faces threats from competing eschatologies or world views. On the one hand, it is at risk because of Zionism, both Jewish and Christian, which has little regard for the Palestinian people. On the other hand, there is a threat from those who would destroy the State of Israel. We believe in the hope of the Kingdom of God in which all citizens enjoy their full human rights and whose human dignity and worth are affirmed and upheld.

This is exactly the situation the Church seeks for the Palestinian people who have suffered from the displacement and dispossession they call the Nakba (disaster). The territory which is now the State of Israel was inhabited by Palestinian people whose lives were turned upside down in 1948 when they were forced from their homes, towns and villages. The aftermath of the Six Day War in 1967 saw further disruption when Israel began its occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, Sinai and the Golan Heights. Today, from those 750,000 original Palestinian refugees, there are 4.8 million who live in legal limbo, longing for a resolution of the political stalemate.⁶

This land is also the cradle of our faith; the place Christ was born, lived, ministered, died and was resurrected. The Christian community which grew from those early disciples has sought to remain faithful over twenty centuries of births, marriages and deaths; work and play; and countless invasions and occupations. That community, today less than 2% of the population, is imperilled; it is continuously diminishing and losing its rootedness in the local society as more and more individuals and families choose to emigrate. Today, there are more Palestinian Christians in Chile than there are in Palestine.⁷

At the Sabeel Conference in 2006, a survey⁸ of the reasons for Palestinian Christian emigration from the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and from Israel highlighted the economic and political volatility arising from occupation – the Separation Wall, the check-points, the confiscation of land, and the political uncertainty – as vital factors in explaining Christian emigration.

For the Christians in Galilee, unlike the Occupied Territory, the Wall and checkpoints are not the key issue for emigration; the factors here tend to be economic, but also discrimination and being a minority within a minority. A 2010 survey in Al-Liqa' Journal, 'The Christian Arab Youth in Galilee'⁹ found that 28.4% of young Christians in the Galilee (Palestinian citizens of Israel) think seriously about emigration. This is in contrast to a similar study in 1990 when the figure was under 1% (0.57%). The following were given as motives for emigration: the bad economic and political situation – 33%; studying – 30%; freedom and stability abroad – 19%; 'I have no future in this country' – 12%; and, joining family members abroad – 6%.

Despite two decades of 'peace process,' Kairos Palestine summarises the present reality: "The decision-makers content themselves with managing the crisis rather than committing themselves to the serious task of finding a way to resolve it." Settlements have massively expanded, East Jerusalem has been systematically colonised, and the Separation Wall has surrounded many towns and villages in the West Bank and left agricultural land and aquifers beyond Palestinian accessibility. Gaza is cut off from the rest of the world. To echo the words of Jeremiah (6:14): "They have treated the wound of my people carelessly, saying, 'Peace, peace', when there is no peace." If wrongs are not righted how can there be peace? Ending the Israeli occupation of Palestinian Territory is a fundamental requirement for justice.

Michel Sabbah, Latin (Roman Catholic) Patriarch, appealed to the churches of the world: "The greatest contribution that can be made to Christians in the Holy Land is to help put an end to the conflict."¹⁰

Resistance is a right and duty ... but it is resistance with love as its logic. (Kairos Palestine 4.2.3)

As the Israeli occupation is further embedded into the physical landscape of the Palestinian Territory, it is essential for those who support the rule of law to struggle all the harder to hold Israel and the international community accountable to International Law and International Humanitarian Law (laws applicable in wars or armed conflict). It is important to offer the hand of friendship and to walk with and support those who are taking an active part in their own efforts to bring a better future for themselves and their communities.

“Resistance is a right and a duty for the Christian. But it is resistance with love as its logic. It is thus a creative resistance ... We can resist through civil disobedience ... through respect of life.” (Kairos Palestine 4.2.3 & 4.2.5) Thus the Christian Palestinian writers highlight their path of resistance to the forces which would deny their humanity and equality through creative non-violence. We have seen it in 2011 at work most inspiringly in Tahrir Square in Cairo, and then spreading across the Middle East.

Non-violent protest has been a growing phenomenon amongst the Palestinian community in the past decade and many are increasingly following the lead of the villages of Budrus (www.justvision.org/budrus) and Bil'in (www.bilin-fffj.org) where villagers, supported by Israeli and international friends, have found creative ways to express their opposition to the continued Israeli settler expansion. Each Friday, they demonstrate against the Israeli appropriation of Palestinian land by the route of the Wall (this is the terminology used by the International Court of Justice, recognising that it is sometimes a wall and sometimes an electronic fence with a surrounding exclusion zone) in creative and non-violent ways with local and international supporters.

Jewish, Muslim and Christian peacemakers from organisations like B'Tselem, Rabbis for Human Rights, the Israeli Committee against House Demolition, Machsom Watch, Tayyoush, Zochorot, Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Christian Peacemaker Teams and EAPPI stand together for justice and equal rights for all. Women in Black, started by a group of Jewish women, hold a demonstration each Friday, as they have been doing for over 20 years, near the Prime Minister's residence in Jerusalem to protest the ongoing Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory.

The reality is the daily humiliation to which we are subjected (Kairos Palestine 1.1.3)

The average age in Gaza is 17.2 years; in the UK it is 39.5 years. There are 1.5 million people living in 139 square miles (For comparison, Midlothian covers around the same area and has a population of 80,000¹¹). Mass unemployment, extreme poverty and food price rises caused by shortages have left four in five Gazans dependent on humanitarian aid.¹² Yet Gaza has a rich agricultural heritage, manufacturing history and a skilled workforce. The deep poverty in Gaza is a deliberate and calculated result of the declared policy of the Israeli government which notified American diplomats that they, “intend to keep Gaza's economy on the brink of collapse without quite pushing it over the edge.”¹³ Oxfam¹⁴ reported no fuel had been allowed in for the Gaza power plant between Jan 5 and Feb 12, 2011, resulting in smuggling through tunnels from Egypt. As a form of collective punishment, Israel's continuing blockade of Gaza is a flagrant violation of international law.

Humanitarian aid is a short-term solution and can never be the answer to people's long-term needs. The deep poverty in Gaza requires a systemic change. While calling for this, the churches have also supported immediate and developmental assistance. Educational opportunities, vocational training for the young, medical care and social assistance as well as emergency relief have been part of the work and witness of the Churches to the people of Gaza through the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) and its vocational training courses.

Mohammad Anan Mansour lives in a small house with his seven siblings and mother in one of the largest refugee camps in the Gaza Strip. At fifteen, and with no interest in school, Mohammed applied to enrol in the MECC Vocational Training Centre on a three-year carpentry and furniture-making course. Mohammed was determined to become a skilled carpenter in order to earn income to assist his family, which currently depended on whatever food was being distributed by humanitarian organisations, usually dry rations and oil. As well as getting a skill which will help him support his family, the MECC programme offers psychosocial counselling to help Mohammed deal with the trauma sustained when witnessing his father, a bus driver, being killed in front of him during the Israeli offensive on Gaza 2009-10, when Israeli war planes bombarded his home and neighbourhood.¹⁵

Such stories highlight the way of love offered freely from the Christian Churches to a people suffering under poverty, blockade, ideology, politicians, and inhuman isolation. These things make for peace and are a witness to those who opt for violence on all sides.

The Council pays tribute to the recently retired Director of the MECC Gaza Office, Mr Constantine Dabbagh. In the midst of difficult and trying circumstances, Mr Dabbagh has been a real Christian presence and inspiration in initiating, sustaining and developing the MECC's work and witness in Gaza.

Human beings were not made for hatred (Kairos Palestine 5.4.3)

One example of a love and a passion for justice and reconciliation is found at the Tent of Nations (www.tentofnations.org), an inspirational action started by two Lutheran brothers, Mr Daoud Nassar and Mr Daher Nassar. On their farm between Beit Jala and the Green Line (the armistice line of 1948) and surrounded by settlers who want to expel the family and take over the land their grandfather bought a century ago, international volunteers help the Nassars run programmes for local and international participants. Children's camps, olive tree planting and harvesting, work days and painting groups keep the place alive and busy and discourage Israeli settlers from taking the land themselves. Natural resources are conserved through micro-generation and the use of technology and the brothers have built cisterns to capture and conserve water. Their original cave home is now used as a dormitory for visitors; another cave is a meeting room, and another is used as a chapel.

Their caves and tents are under threat of demolition and they must argue in Israeli courts to keep their own land, yet they continue to inspire hope. Arriving on the farm, visitors are greeted with a sign, "We refuse to be enemies." The Nassars have sought to love their neighbour and have Christian, Muslim and Jewish supporters and participants. To worship with Daher in the cave is something especially spiritual and moving. These things make for peace.

نرفض أن نكون أعداء

WE REFUSE
TO BE ENEMIES
WIR WEIGERN UNS
FEINDE ZU SEIN

We Refuse to be Enemies

At gunpoint, at night, Daoud Nassar is stopped by Israeli soldiers on his way home to Bethlehem from his farm. He is ordered to remove his children from the car so the soldiers can search it. Calmly, he wakes up his children and tells them not to be afraid, that the Israeli soldier is not their enemy, that all will be well. After the search is completed, Daoud thanks the officer, who looks disconcerted and embarrassed. Thus in everyday life does Daoud Nassar live out the motto of his small Tent of Nations charity, “We Refuse to be Enemies”.

Daoud speaks of how his family land, bought by his grandfather nearly 100 years ago, is under threat of confiscation; the only hope left is people who will work and bring life to this land and protect them from settler encroachment. He has created a place at this family farm on a hill west of Bethlehem where young people are encouraged to imagine a better future, where they can learn to love their country without hating the other, where they can seek to build bridges of understanding, reconciliation, and peace, and where Palestinian, Israeli and international visitors can meet and stand together in solidarity for peace, justice and human dignity.

You can listen to an interview with Daoud Nassar on the Church of Scotland website here: http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/resources/subjects/world_mission_resources

A major aspect of life in the region, where Christians and Muslims are close neighbours, is the need to strengthen their unity as one people facing many challenges. During the first ever “World Interfaith Harmony Week” (1-7 February 2011), designated by the United Nations General Assembly, Bishop Munib Younan appealed to world churches: “there is no place in the world in which ... churches live on their own. [We] live with other religions – sometimes in a minority position, sometimes in a majority position, but never alone ... [This week] carries a strong message ... to find the common values that promote justice, coexistence, peace, tolerance, and to work together for the eradication of poverty, the promotion of the role of women, and reconciliation in our world.”

The heads of churches in Jerusalem sit on the Council of Religious Institutions in the Holy Land (CRIHL), which is comprised of the two chief Rabbis, the Islamic court, and the minister of religious affairs to address and discuss key issues for the faith communities.

The Sabeel Liberation Theology Centre has been developing more grassroots contacts between Christian and Muslim community leaders, pastors and imams to forge good relations and build mutual understanding. During a 2010 Muslim-Christian encounter, 38 Muslim clerics joined a similar number of Palestinian clergy to focus on how people of different religions live together in peace and mutual acceptance.

One participant, Sheikh Zuhair, a Muslim leader in the Nablus area, emphasised that, in the Islamic tradition, religious leaders had a duty to bring awareness to their followers of the need to live together in peace and acceptance, and not allow the occupier to cancel the Christian presence and sow seeds of dissent between these faith communities. Naim Ateek led a workshop explaining Christian Zionism and the anti Islamic commentary of some western churches and politicians. He emphasised that these were alien ideas for the local Churches and Christian community which had lived side by side with Muslim neighbours for centuries.¹⁶ It is important to model coexistence to guide and inspire public opinion. These things make for peace.

Through its support for Sabeel, the World Mission Council has had opportunity to engage in theological dialogue with the local Christian community. From its outset, Sabeel has pioneered work amongst the Christian community to build and sustain ecumenical awareness and contacts between the historic churches in Palestine and Israel. Today, Sabeel continues its ecumenical witness, with clergy, youth and women's programmes.

Each Thursday at noon in Jerusalem, Sabeel holds a service that is open to the community. It is a time to join together to celebrate the Lord's Supper, to discuss how the scriptures apply today, and to pray for the specific needs of the region. Sabeel sends out a weekly "Wave of Prayer" to supporters from New Zealand through Asia, Europe and the Americas and back to the Pacific to join with them at noon on Thursdays in prayer for the region and its peoples, that peace may reign and God's will be done. We encourage you to pray for peace either with Sabeel or at a time that suits you and your community. Such things make for peace.



Are you able to help us get our freedom back? (Kairos Palestine 6.1)

Accompanying Christians, Muslims and Jews, all those who seek justice and peace, is the calling of the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (*EAPPI*; www.eappi.org). The EAPPI Code of Conduct states: “We stand faithfully with the poor, the oppressed and the marginalized. We want to serve all parties in this conflict in a fair and unbiased manner in word and action.” The Church of Scotland and Christian Aid have been amongst the key British and Irish supporters of EAPPI since its foundation in 2001, and there have been participants from 15 different countries. Our ministers in Jerusalem and Galilee have been resources for serving Ecumenical Accompaniers, as well as offering pastoral care and hospitality to volunteers and staff of the programme.

Through sending volunteers to live for three months in Palestine and Israel and offering “protection by presence” to vulnerable individuals and communities, every Ecumenical Accompanier (EA) is a witness to the incarnational love of God.

Many Scots, including several members and ministers of the Church of Scotland, have participated in the EAPPI programme, and in so doing been transformed themselves and have returned home to make valuable contributions to church and society in explaining and highlighting the realities of the situation. One EA noted that relationships were the most important result of the three month experience, assuring people “they are valued, they aren’t forgotten.” The Council encourages you to consider volunteering in EAPPI.

One experience, from an EA working near Nablus, highlights the impact of settlers in creating Palestinian poverty. Akram Ibrahim Ali Imran went to his land in the village of Burin one morning in early September 2010 to find about twenty of his olive trees slashed or severed using chainsaws by men from the Yitzhar settlement. The EA reported, “branches covered with hundreds of olives were lying on the ground, already desiccated from the lack of moisture.”¹⁷ Less than a year earlier, Akram had lost 81 trees in a similar incident. These 100 trees would have produced around US \$20,000, a significant sum in the Palestinian economy. “This is

how I support my family. Now we only have twenty left,' Akram told the EA.

EAs monitor agricultural gates to check if Israeli soldiers open them to allow Palestinian farmers into their lands in the 'seam zone' (between the Separation Wall and the Green Line); they help children go to school in Hebron when threatened with settler violence; they accompany the villagers of Yanoun who would be forced to abandon their homes to settlers if there was not an international presence.

Members of the Church of Scotland Guild have been enthusiastic and committed supporters of the work of the Church around the world. In the Guild project 2009-2012 "What does the Lord require of you?",¹⁸ Guild members are supporting the Council's Interfaith Action project in Palestine and Israel. The project introduction states: "As the prospect of resolution of the conflict in the region ebbs and flows, it becomes ever more necessary to support those who refuse to accept the inevitability of conflict, and the impossibility of any reconciliation."

The project has three parts: Christian (EAPPI), Muslim (a community education and development project in Jayyous) and Jewish (Rabbis for Human Rights (RHR)). RHR is an Israeli Jewish group which is relentless and vociferous in its efforts for justice and coexistence (www.rhr.org.il). RHR organises supporters to go into the Palestinian territories and support Palestinians threatened by settlers when planting or harvesting crops or trying to go about their normal life. Within the Guild project, RHR has piloted the "Sisters for Peace" project at Sapir College in Sderot to encourage young women from the Bedouin and Jewish religious societies to study and become more active for women's education, empowerment and rights. RHR are in a small but active and vocal grouping of Israeli organisations, such as the Israeli Committee against House Demolitions, Physicians for Human Rights, B'Tselem and Breaking the Silence which challenge government policies and seek a just peace for Palestinian and Israeli alike.

Members of the World Mission Council's Middle East Committee have been able to visit all three projects, including with the Moderator in March 2010. The Council, through the Faithshare Visitors Programme, has been pleased to support two participants in a group of Guild visitors to these projects in March 2011 under the leadership of Clarence and Joan Musgrave. These things make for peace.

Writing stories from the midst of the experience and returning home to speak and share the experience is a central element in the EA programme, Mission Partner or pilgrim visitor experience. This advocacy, sharing the stories of partners and learning from those who can speak from personal experience, is necessary, valuable and strategic.

A key action, in which Scots can join churches all around the world, is the World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel which asks us to pray, educate and advocate for peace in Palestine and Israel. (www.worldweekforpeace.org)

Our hope remains strong. (Kairos Palestine 3.1)

Working with organisations such as the Al-Shurooq School For Blind Children; Lutheran and Episcopal congregations, schools and hospitals; the Idna Women's Cooperative; the Jayyous Community Project; the Galilee Society HIV project; Atfaluna Deaf School, Bethlehem Bible College, Canaan and Sindyanna Fair Trade Cooperatives, Wi'am, and more, the Council helps support the contemporary Palestinian presence living and working in their homeland.


One close relationship is that with Sunbula, which has had a shop in St Andrew's Guest House for two decades and has recently opened another in East Jerusalem, in Sheikh Jarrah. Sunbula works in partnership with over 20 community based organisations (involving more than 2000 artisans). Many of the organisations Sunbula supports are women's groups creating employment in their communities because, as a result of the Wall, there is little or no employment for the men. With some based in refugee camps, and others in small towns and villages (including a L'Arche community in Bethlehem), the income and skills developed through Sunbula help people to adapt socially to the consequences of occupation and the destruction of traditional ways of living and relating. These things make for peace.

In the Parish Grouping of St Andrews Scots Memorial Church, Jerusalem, and St Andrew's Galilee, Tiberias, both congregations are small but very hospitable and in the tourist season can welcome large numbers of worshippers. The turnover of expatriates is quite fast and members of the congregations are dispersed. This means recognising a real need to build a sense of family support in the churches. Both Churches are exploring the development of 'peace gardens', and at Tiberias there is consideration of how best to redevelop in a way that strengthens our peace, reconciliation and interfaith presence.

The two ministers are fully involved in work with partner churches (especially through our formal partnerships with the local Episcopal and the Lutheran Churches), and with Christian, Jewish and Muslim organisations and individuals in the broader community, both within the State of Israel and within the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Presbytery of Jerusalem has incorporated Mission Partners as corresponding members to encourage mutual support and also more engagement with the broader work of the church, and is exploring links with the Presbytery of Europe to facilitate more joint working and support.

Tabeetha School in Jaffa came into the Church of Scotland in 1912, having been bequeathed to the Church by the school's founder, Jane Walker-Arnott. In a region where the marginalised Christian community is a minority within a minority and have very little they can still call their own, Tabeetha School has been a Christian witness for 148 years. Tabeetha offers good quality education, building tolerance and coexistence where education is so often used to reinforce opposing narratives and entrench conflict.

The Council's presence in Palestine and Israel is further consolidated and deepened through the Mission Partners who are working there, each of whom has links to congregations here in Scotland. These Mission Partners are resources for the Council and whole Church of Scotland, helping to share the story, not just of their own work but of the issues encountered daily by the communities they work alongside and with whom they walk. Their writing and speaking can help Presbyteries and congregations here at home better understand the issues and challenges facing the Palestinian Christian community, indeed the wider Palestinian and Israeli



societies. It is also hoped that such connections will encourage individuals and congregations to visit this land, not just to be where Jesus walked, but to meet the local Christian community, the ‘living stones’ of the Holy Land, see their situation, get to know them better, build lasting and ongoing relationships and be friends in good times and bad. These things make for peace.

Poverty in Palestine and Israel is deeply inter-related with the occupation. These elements cause misery for the people, but providing essential aid can only ever be one part of the road to recovery. For peace to prevail, poverty of opportunity, employment, culture and education must also be addressed. An essential aspect of Palestinian peace-building initiatives has been the important place of cultural awareness and development. Cultural life has seen a renaissance with the Palestinian Literary Festival (the former Moderator, Alison Elliot, is on the Board), Jerusalem Music Festival, the Palestinian National Orchestra, the Edward Said Conservatory of Music, Daniel Barenboim’s West-Eastern Divan Workshop, storytelling, art exhibitions and many theatre and dance groups which travel around the world sharing their life situation through stories and songs and bringing a human face to the Palestinian reality.

One prominent example comes from the Diyyar Consortium of the Christmas Lutheran Church in Bethlehem. Just before Christmas 2010, the largest construction project seen in Bethlehem in many years was inaugurated as their Higher Education and Research Centre. Through this new building, the Lutheran Church in Bethlehem offers space where Palestinian young people can “express their feelings, thoughts and ideas in art and music; can shape their minds through theatre, and embody them through dance. Through their films they will be able to give a face to a community banned beyond the Wall and inspired by Christ who gave God a face, a voice and a name.” Rev Dr Mitri Raheb, minister in Bethlehem, rejoiced in this opportunity, “Christmas is not about what happened 2000 years ago, but it is all about what God started then and is still continuing here and now through us all.”¹⁹ The Council was pleased to be able to offer support for a local staff member to teach in the Media Centre project. These things make for peace.

We say to the Churches: come and see. (Kairos Palestine 6.2)

For decades the Church of Scotland, through the Council, has stood alongside the Christian community in the Middle East in friendship, love and solidarity. We have supported educational activities, health services, theological discourse, scholarships, worship and prayer opportunities in Israel and Palestine as well as countries such as Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. The Church of Scotland has also supported regional community organisations such as the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) in its work in Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Iran and the Gulf, and The Fellowship of the Middle East Evangelical Churches which brings together all the Protestant Churches in the region.

Bringing the realities of our partners, their understanding and experiences, into the life of the Church of Scotland is central to our work. This is why the Council has stressed the importance of twinning. The twinning relationship developed between Kemnay and the Minyara Congregation in Lebanon is a prime example. Their aim is to learn from each other, encourage and support one another. And they do this through exchanging information and visits. One touching experience, reported from a visit of Kemnay to Minyara, was of a Scottish woman and a Lebanese woman sharing their experience of widowhood and receiving comfort from each other. Investing in peace is not only about the big picture but about allowing opportunity for touching of hearts and the enrichment of individual faith journeys. In the Galilee, the congregation of St Michael's, Linlithgow has begun a journey of friendship and partnership with Holy Family Episcopal Church in Raineih. These things make for peace.

Within a twinning relationship, each congregation also prays for the wider political and social situation, being mindful of what is happening in the country of their 'twin'. In Lebanon, there is political unrest, a fragile peace and very little inter-religious cooperation. Mary Mikhael, President of the Near East School of Theology (NEST) in Beirut, appealed to all partners: "Once again anxiety and fear are knocking at our doors as Lebanon seems to be caught in a vicious circle. For how long, and what days ahead

will bring us, are questions on our minds. Please pray for us and with us for wisdom and God's guidance for our President and all the decision makers in Lebanon. Pray for peace and stability in Lebanon and the entire Middle East."²⁰ We can pray with and for NEST, for our partners in the Presbyterian Synod of Syria and Lebanon, the wider Christian communities and all society in Lebanon and Syria in a knowledgeable way.

Events in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (Gaza and the West Bank) have repercussions across the Arab world, and beyond. Jean Zaru, from the Society of Friends in Ramallah, has been one of the key peacemakers within the churches in recent decades and her insight is instructive: "The Arab-Israeli conflict is the cause of an explosive situation that could become a threat to world peace. It now affects the lives of millions of people in the Middle East; if it widens, it could affect the lives of tens of millions of people elsewhere."²¹ It is in the interests of world peace that the churches speak out and focus on pressing for a just solution to Israel's 44-year occupation of Palestinian lands and oppression of the Palestinian people, and support those seeking more open, just and tolerant societies.

Jean Zaru is prescient in her analysis. The early part of 2011 saw an upswell of public opinion in the Arab world. Uri Avnery, the veteran Israeli politician and peacemaker, who was a member of the Jewish underground Irgun and fought against the British in the late 1940's, supported Jean Zaru's point in claiming that the underlying cause of the unrest could be named as Palestine: "In Arab culture, nothing is more important than honour. People can suffer deprivation, but they will not stand humiliation ... How would I feel if I were a 15 year-old boy in Alexandria, Amman or Aleppo, seeing my leaders behave like abject slaves of the Americans and the Israelis, while oppressing and despoiling their own subjects. At that age, I myself joined a terrorist organization. Why would an Arab boy be different?"²² In Tunisia, Jordan, Dubai, Bahrain, Palestine, Yemen, Iran, and Egypt people did not join terrorist organisations, but took to the streets in a mass movement of people against dictatorial regimes.

In Egypt, a spontaneous 25 January non-violent uprising occupied Tahrir Square and challenged and then ended the 30 year reign of Hosni Mubarak as President. In Arabic, the word “Tahrir” means liberation, not a final liberation but an ongoing process of liberation. The liberation of people in the Middle East will need their ongoing commitment in the struggle to liberate themselves and their countries from autocratic and unjust regimes. At the time of writing [May 2011] the way forward is uncertain. The military in Egypt have seized control and, with no clear process for a smooth succession or for the introduction of greater democratic accountability, the risks of confusion and violence are high. Justice is what makes for peace in the long run. The vigilance and commitment of the people in ensuring political accountability all over the Middle East will be a necessary imperative, as will support from around the world in helping train and equip people for the future.

The Egyptian churches have also experienced difficult times, most recently in the New Year’s Day bombings of a Coptic Orthodox Church in Alexandria, and are seeking to counter this and reach a way of peaceable co-existence. The Council shared its prayers and support for the local churches and their safety and the wellbeing of the whole society, as well as for a just and peaceable future. We have had many links with the Presbyterian Synod of the Nile and today one important area of engagement is support from the Church of Scotland HIV Programme as the Synod seeks to develop a Church Network against AIDS.

The Coptic Evangelical Organisation for Social Services (CEOSS), founded by an Egyptian Presbyterian minister and still connected with the church today, is working with Christian and Muslim leaders in Egyptian society to develop mutual understanding and better relationships. They are a long-time partner with Christian Aid and other development agencies. Starting from a programme to address the crushing poverty of rural Egypt, CEOSS soon realised that overcoming poverty requires sustainable development which would bring justice and peace. Their intercultural dialogue programme is part of their overall dedication to seek fullness of life for all in Egyptian society, and this needs deeper understanding between Muslim and Christian. These things make for peace.

Land and presence are deeply intertwined.

It is important to the Christian community, as our Episcopal and Lutheran partners have frequently emphasised, that land is kept within the community. The Church of Scotland owns and runs the Scots Hotel in Tiberias. A decade ago, the Church decided to invest in its property there. The Council plans to develop the work of the Scots Hotel and St Andrew's Guest House in Jerusalem organically to help them continue to serve the needs identified in dialogue with the local community and our partner churches. The Council wants to make the Centres it operates places for building bridges and seeking opportunities for people to speak, hear and engage with one another from all different views and experiences in the pursuit of peace with justice.

The Scots Hotel is used by many pilgrim groups from a wide range of denominations and countries, visiting the land of Christ's birth. At the beginning of this year, pilgrim groups from Taiwan, Indonesia and USA were recorded in the visitors' book. The latter, a Presbyterian Church USA group, was on its way to a partnership meeting with the Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem. Many have expressed their appreciation for the quality of the facilities and the welcome and kindness from the staff. There has also been particular appreciation for the Quiet Room in the tower in the garden and use of the church for group worship.

For The Scots Hotel to remain attractive and competitive, it needs the facilities which visitors seek out when choosing a place to stay. The Council, after professional advice and with help and guidance from the Church of Scotland Trust and the Council of Assembly, agreed to make a further investment in the long-term future of The Scots Hotel in adding a Wellness Centre (fitness centre and treatment rooms). The plans and financial projections have been closely scrutinised, the oversight for the work is in place with professional project managers appointed, and the management expertise is on the ground to see this development through within the agreed parameters. This decision has been taken over a period of years and with much professional guidance and prayerful

PALESTINIAN LOSS OF LAND 1946 TO TODAY



consideration. The Scots Hotel is an investment which brings income to the Council. This is money which the Council is using to support its work in Israel and Palestine to further the message and practice of peace.

In the Centres, the Council seeks to run organisations that are tangible and visible witnesses to Christian principles and traditions, for example in employment policies, in how they treat suppliers (fairly, and preferably Fair Trade), in dealing with the government and taxes, and in their effect on the environment. Forsan Hussein, Director of the West Jerusalem YMCA, has emphasised that one of the biggest problems the world (and Israel and Palestine) faces is one of ethical leadership (in politics, business, society) and this is one area which the Council seeks to address.

The Galilee is, geographically, an important meeting point – it is central to Jordan, Syria, Palestine, and the Lebanon. The Galilee is an area of deep symbolic relevance within our faith. We remember the ministry of Christ in this area as a ministry of healing and reconciliation, of challenging the forces which create barriers between people, and we seek to offer a space where prophetic voices may speak and engage people to offer a contemporary message of peace and reconciliation that is for the whole world.

The Church of Scotland's original presence in the Galilee served people of that whole region, without any distinction on race, religion or nationality. In the midst of 'the storm,' we seek to plant the seeds of peace. Already there is engagement with the Peace Prints Project in the Galilee, and planning with the Anglican Church for a Galilee conference on Kairos Palestine. The Galilee is an important area today. In the long term, it could again be the crossing point it was in the days of Dr Torrance, the founder of the Scots Mission Hospital in 1885, the building which is now the Scots Hotel. Our work for wholeness and healing could be open to engagement from around the region as well as between Israelis and Palestinians. This is our dream. This is our intention. We are determined that the investment in the hotel will be an investment in peace.

The Church of Scotland HIV Programme²³ (formerly the Church of Scotland HIV/AIDS Project) has been integrated into the work of the Council, and one of the beneficiaries is The Galilee Society: The Arab National Society for Health Research & Services in Northern Israel. The Galilee Society promotes Aids awareness, seeking to reduce the risk of the disease in a culture in which there remains deep prejudice about HIV and little knowledgeable discussion. The Galilee Society has targeted schools in its educational materials to introduce a new generation to the realities and risks of HIV. The Society reports an increase in the numbers of religious leaders expressing interest in such educational opportunities within their communities.

Such initiatives also develop understanding and build relationships within the community and open doors to new perspectives and the development of open minds. We can think of Christ's teaching about the nature of the Christian community, of how we must live together and serve each other, putting the real needs of people at the heart of what we are about. The Council is seeking creative ways to put peace and reconciliation at the heart of our life in our work in the Middle East. We want to work with other Councils of the Church of Scotland to find areas for cooperation in story telling or witness or mediation or healing, for example with others in the Priority Areas Action Plan; in Together for a Change to link Priority Areas with Palestinian communities; with Mission and Discipleship to offer young people opportunities to meet partners and understand the realities of the situation; with the Ministries Council in offering candidates for the ministry a placement in Jerusalem and with the Place of Hope initiative which seeks to equip churches to offer a message of hope, healing and reconciliation. Churches which are not able to handle their own differences are not well placed to play that role in the world.

The Council sees the Church of Scotland offering this opportunity for healing and growth, through our Centres, to our partners and others seeking to be healthy and holistic in their life and witness. The Council wants to offer opportunities to share the skill of mediation and its power to transform conflicted situations, and to have people learn more about themselves and learn better ways of handling conflict to help transform their own churches and organisations into vessels for peace and reconciliation. We do not pretend that we are leading the field, but we might just be beginning to do our duty. These things make for peace.

Be patient, steadfast and full of hope (Kairos Palestine 5.3)

Bishop Munib Younan has emphasised that: “Justice is by nature not balanced, it is on the side of the suffering and the oppressed, the weak and the poor. ... the power of the cross (is) that God has redeemed all humanity equally, regardless of gender, ethnicity or race, whether powerful or weak, rich or poor, from the north or south, east or west. The reign of God calls us all together to the higher vision of seeking justice, love and reconciliation for all people.”

The Council has taken this message to heart and is investing in peace in support of justice for our partners and friends in a variety of countries and contexts around the world. They want our friendship and companionship along the journey to wholeness and fullness of life. As we travel together we can celebrate together our milestones. Peace is a universal longing. We are investing in peace. And we want every member of the Church of Scotland to have the opportunity to do the same.

We end with an invitation to every member of the Church of Scotland to Invest in Peace. Already some people will have been aware of what is happening in Israel and Palestine and will have become involved in one way or another; while for others this is new territory. We have prepared “an investment portfolio” for everyone and we promise to assist any member who wants to choose from it. We have listed websites, and more information is available on our own one (www.churchofscotland.org.uk), but we are also prepared to answer questions and provide further guidance. The investment portfolio is designed so that people can enter at different levels, with different amounts of experience and commitment.

Whatever your level, join together as a cloud of witnesses seeking justice, peace and reconciliation for all God's children. Invest in peace wherever you are, today.

Investment portfolio

More information is available on the Church of Scotland website www.cofscotland.org.uk

Search for 'invest in peace' or look in 'connect' and 'World Church'

To invest in peace in Israel and Palestine you can:

Pray

Choose a specific time each week; reflect on Matthew 5: 9: Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God; and pray for some of those peace-makers mentioned in this report. We dream of a great number of people in Scotland praying for peace in the Middle East with Sabeel (www.sabeel.org) and friends around the world at noon every Thursday. And remember our own Mission Partners working there.

Give

- › Money always matters. £10 to the Al-Shurooq school or £100 to the Christian Aid programme in Gaza will make a real difference.
- › Books for the Lutheran Schools Library Project.
- › Support the Guild Project.
- › Give three months of your life as an EAPPI volunteer.
- › Give a present to someone that you have bought at the Hadeel shop online (www.hadeel.org) or in Shandwick Place, Edinburgh.

Write

- › Send a Christmas card to Bethlehem. See website.
- › Write to your MP or to the Israeli Ambassador to the UK reinforcing British opposition to settlements.

Watch

- › Films such as: The Promise, Budrus, With God on our Side, East Side Story.

Read

- › Christian Aid reports (www.christianaid.org.uk).
- › Naim Ateek's book A Palestinian Christian Cry for Reconciliation.
- › Blogs from Mission Partners:
Colin Johnston: <http://colinintiberias.blogspot.com>,
George Shand: <http://georghand.wordpress.com>,
Tabetha School: <http://tabeethaschool.blogspot.com>

Study

- › Kairos Palestine document – www.kairospalestine.ps
- › Invite a Mission Partner on deputation to speak.
- › Invite a returned volunteer from EAPPI to speak.

Join

- › The Scottish Palestinian Forum.
- › Israeli Committee Against House Demolition.
- › The Friends of Tabeetha.
- › The Friends of St Andrews.
- › Other groups mentioned in the report.
- › Participate in the World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel.
Doing things together is so often better.

Meet

- › Christians in Israel and Palestine by going on a Living Stones pilgrimage. We can help you think about this before you go.
- › Invite your Muslim or Jewish neighbours to discuss with you their hopes for peace in Israel and Palestine.
- › Twin your congregation and build a relationship with a congregation in the Middle East.

These things make for peace.



Endnotes

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- 06 <http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=86>
- 07 www.thisweekinpalestine.com/details.php?id=2409&ed=151&edid=151 Palestinian Christians: Facts, Figures and Trends. Diyyar, 2008
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- 13 New York Times, Jan 5, 2010
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- 15 NECC Gaza, Annual Report 2009
- 16 Sabeel Annual Report 2010
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- 18 www.churchofscotland.org.uk/councils/guild/gdprojects.htm
- 19 www.diyar.ps
- 20 Letter to partners, Dec 2010
- 21 Jean Zaru, The Things That Make For Peace, Global Ministries, USA. <http://globalministries.org/resources/mission-study/college-of-mission/things-that-make-for-peace.html>
- 22 www.gush-shalom.org, Feb 5, 2011
- 23 www.churchofscotland.org.uk/speak_out/hiv_programme

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