



Update on the Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine

Peace Not Walls

Implementation of the “Peace Not Walls” campaign and the ELCA Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine, approved by the 2005 Churchwide Assembly, is organized by goals and actions in three areas: awareness building, accompaniment, and advocacy.

Awareness-Building

Activities to Date

1. Initiation of a comprehensive communication strategy with the following goal:

To engage and empower this church and its members to mobilize public action for peace in the Middle East and preservation of its faith communities.

The communication strategy is intended to convey the message:

The profound injustice and suffering in the Holy Land compel us as people of faith to act for peace with justice.

2. “Peace Not Walls” resources were sent to 20 Synod Assemblies in 2007, including a bookmark designed by the International Center in Bethlehem and brief DVD promoting the Peace Not Walls Web site and “Forbidden Families” video.

3. The Al Raja Palestinian dance troupe conducted a 50-day U.S. tour in summer 2006, with audiences totaling 52,000 including tens of thousands at the San Antonio ELCA Youth Gathering. About 12,000 copies of the educational Al Raja Playbill and other Middle East peace materials were distributed.

4. A major redesign of the “Peace Not Walls” Web site (www.elca.org/peacenotwalls/) was completed, including addition of a section on “Frequently Asked Questions” and content about the impact of the Israeli separation barrier on the Palestinian population.

5. Merged the Middle East informational list-serv (MENET) with the public policy action alerts via the E-advocacy network, with significant increase in number of subscribers (from 500 in summer 2006 to 891 in summer 2007), and created a new HTML format for list-serv releases in spring 2007.

6. Provided assistance to the Research and Evaluation section of the Office of the Presiding Bishop on a proposed survey on member attitudes toward the Bible’s implications for current Middle East issues.

7. “Peace Not Walls” presence via handouts and staff was provided at several churchwide events, such as gatherings of

synod communicators, regional resource center directors, Lutheran youth leaders, Equipping for Peace-making, and at January 2007 Global Mission Events in Florida and Arizona.

8. Web site pages and MENET list-serv dispatches marking the 40th anniversary of the occupation were prepared.

9. Continued work on a master communication plan for 2008–2009, to include resources, media, leadership development, advocacy, and outcomes assessment.

Goals for the 2007-2009 Biennium

1. Continue planning and implementing master communication plan, including:

- clarifying existing resources and best uses;
- assessing unmet needs and catalogue other existing needs;
- building database of Middle East awareness and advocacy activists;
- leadership development;
- engaging public media; and
- measuring success.

2. Increase:

- by 50 percent the number of equipped and engaged church leaders;
- by 10 percent the number of members who have knowledge of conflict and injustice in the region;
- by five percent the number of church members activated; and
- by 10 percent the media coverage reflecting recognition of our campaign.

3. Strengthen internal ELCA staff communication, including with synodical communicators.

4. Expand and improve the “Peace Not Walls” Web site, transferring content from Middle East Connections and adding new content.

Accompaniment

Activities to Date

1. Continuing synodical and congregational use of Palestinian communion ware and Middle East prayer vigil and promotion of both in *Seeds for the Parish* articles.

2. Drafting of group trip recommended guidelines to be posted on the “Peace Not Walls” Web site, to be shared with ELCA groups and individuals considering leading Holy Land trips.

3. January 2007 visit by ELCA staff and synodical leaders to Lutheran ministries in Jerusalem and the West Bank and to see first hand living conditions for Palestinians.
4. Coordinated Bishop Munib A. Younan's U.S. speaking tour January 2007, and prepared for his participation at the August 2007 Churchwide Assembly.
5. Inclusion as speakers in the July 2007 Global Mission Event returned Middle East missionaries and a representative from the Contact and Resource Center in Beirut, Lebanon.

Goals for the 2007-2009 Biennium

1. Build relationships through strategic visits, and expand capacity to assist Holy Land visits sponsored throughout the ELCA.
2. Add trip coordination staff members in Chicago, Washington, D.C., and/or Jerusalem.
3. Increase participation in the prayer vigil and use of the Holy Land communion ware.
4. Increase financial support to the ministries partners in the Holy Land.
5. Improve the transmission of information about, and messages from, Palestinian partners throughout the ELCA.
6. Strengthen ELCA engagement with the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme of the World Council of Churches.
7. Assist the Conference of Bishops with plans for the proposed 2009 meeting of the Academy for Bishops in the Holy Land.

Advocacy

Activities to Date

1. Development of a comprehensive two-year outcomes plan for advocacy.
2. Collaboration with Lutheran World Federation member churches to assist the Augusta Victoria Hospital during its financial crisis and advocate with relevant government authorities to provide emergency support to the LWF Jerusalem program.
3. Formation of a small group of self-selected synodical bishops, prepared for Middle East peace public speaking and advocacy, some conducting focused Capitol Hill visits in May 2007.
4. Redesigned the Washington Office Middle East advocacy Web site.
5. Support for Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson's leadership role in the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative, including preparation for the January 29, 2007, meeting with Secretary of

State Condoleezza Rice, and the May 17, 2007, meeting with Mr. R. Nicholas Burns, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs.

6. Exploratory visit to the Middle East region and collaboration with ecumenical counterparts on positive economic investment ideas by ELCA Corporate Social Responsibility staff members.

Goals for the 2007-2009 Biennium

1. Focus on U.S. legislative and executive branch advocacy through Churches for Middle East Peace, and international advocacy through strengthened networks.
2. Expand grass-roots network, and increase MENET and E-Advocacy list-serv subscribers by offering enrollment at all major events.
3. Provide grass-roots training, especially in use of mass media.
4. Enhance the accompaniment program, especially through the Middle East "ready bench" of the Conference of Bishops.
5. Assist coordination of Holy Land visits by bishops who accompany members of Congress.
6. Promote positive economic initiatives such as increasing shareholder network by 10 percent, developing funding sources for microfinance, implementation, and education concerning social criteria screens for investment, and encourage investment in the region by multinational corporations.
7. Strengthen inter-unit coordination, especially between ELCA offices in Chicago and Washington.
8. Maintain interfaith advocacy through such programs as the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative.
9. Participate in the development of a comprehensive communications and media campaign.

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