

Many walls



Reuters/Haim Zach

stand in the way



of peace



ELCA policy

In 2005 the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) adopted the "Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine" and urged members to participate in the campaign, "Peace Not Walls - Stand for Justice in the Holy Land." All in the ELCA are encouraged to express solidarity with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) and concern for all the people of the Holy Land through education, worship, prayer, giving, and advocacy.

The ELCA is committed to work with ecumenical and inter-religious partners toward safety and security for both Israelis and Palestinians, reduction of poverty and unemployment, an end to the occupation, and a negotiated final status agreement that includes a shared Jerusalem with equal access and rights for Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

Churches and walls

Many walls block peace for Israel and Palestine: walls of violence; of occupation; of political corruption and lack of will; of ignorance, mistrust, and fear of the "other." Christians believe both that the gospel breaks down the dividing walls of hostility among people (Eph 2) and that God calls us to work actively for reconciliation in the world (2 Cor 5).

Lutherans in the Holy Land carry out their ministries in the midst of such walls as economic deprivation, internal dissension, and Israeli occupation—walls that increasingly divide and dispossess the people. In Bethlehem Lutherans serve their community surrounded by a concrete wall 30 feet tall.

"The Wall splinters our community into many pieces and makes it impossible to maintain normal family, economic and human relations. Families are separated and divided, and for many there is no legal hope of family reunification. Human rights violations and lack of freedom of movement, association and expression is the daily lot of the Palestinian Christian, indeed of all Palestinians."

Church Leaders in the Holy Land,
"A Call from Jerusalem to the World," Easter 2005

About the separation barrier

Parts of this barrier may indeed protect against terrorist attacks and thus save lives. But at many points it is constructed deep inside the territory that Israel has occupied since 1967. It surrounds Palestinian property, both Israel's illegal settlements and West Bank cities such as Bethlehem, thus confiscating land and water resources.

The ELCA acknowledges the need of the Israeli government to create a safe environment for its citizens. But the separation barrier offers at best a short-term solution. Its continued construction within Palestinian lands will lead to more strained relations and to the increased possibility of violence.

"We, believers from three religions, have been placed in this land, Jews, Christians and Muslims. It is our responsibility to find the right way to live together in peace rather than to fight and kill one other. Palestinians yearn for the end to occupation and for what they see as their inalienable rights. Israelis long for the day when they can live in personal and national security. Together we must find ways of reaching these goals."

Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land,
"The Voice of the Holy Land," November 2007



Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America

Living in God's amazing grace

www.elca.org/peacenotwalls

Call to action

Together with our ecumenical and inter-faith partners we must advocate an end to the factors that undermine the "two-state" solution advocated by the United States government and many other nations in the quest for an independent, viable Palestinian state existing alongside a secure State of Israel at peace with its Arab neighbors. We need to speak out against continued violence and to call for a comprehensive ceasefire, as well as for an end to construction of the separation barrier and expansion of illegal outposts and settlements on Palestinian land.



You can help

Here are some things you and your congregation can do to join the Peace Not Walls campaign.

Learn

Visit the Holy Land and build relationships with Christian brothers and sisters, Israeli Jews, and Palestinian Muslims. Learn about the situation in Israel and Palestine and the ministries of the ELCJHL from others who have visited. Find travel information, including the travel guide "Visiting the Holy Land," at www.elca.org/peacenotwalls/accompany/travel.html.

Provide learning opportunities in Sunday school, and for adult and youth groups. Plan to attend an ELCA Global Mission Event (www.elca.org/gme). Take part in the Churches for Middle East Peace Advocacy Conference (www.cmep.org).

Resources and Information

Go to www.elca.org/peacenotwalls or call 800.638.3522 ext 6466. For advocacy assistance, call 202.783.7507.

RESTRICTIONS SURROUNDING URBAN BETHLEHEM AND ITS ADJOINING COMMUNITIES

Pray

Join others in the ELCA and around the world in prayer that peace with justice will flourish in the Holy Land. Sign up for the prayer vigil and pray in your congregation, circle, family, or community—that walls of fear and concrete will come down. Prayer vigil and other prayer and worship resources are found at www.elca.org/peacenotwalls/pray/



Act

Call or write the president and your congressional representatives.

To contact the White House

- www.whitehouse.gov/contact/

To contact your senators

- www.senate.gov/contacting/index.cfm

To contact your representatives

- www.house.gov/writerep/

- Ask that they call upon the State of Israel and the Palestinian Authority to take the steps necessary for peacemaking, including an end to violence from all sides, an end to settlement expansion, and removal of the portions of the separation barrier on Palestinian land.

- Express your concern about the impact of the barrier and checkpoints on Palestinian communities and churches, as well as on access to schools, work, and vital health care.

- Express your hopes for a two-state final agreement that will ensure a secure Israel and a viable, contiguous Palestinian state.

Sign up for Middle East Network (MENET) at www.elca.org/peacenotwalls—to receive messages about current efforts for peace in Israel and Palestine. Also check out e-Advocacy at www.elca.org/advocacy.



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