

Charter for the St. Mark's Mid-East Working Group

Article I: Name and Purpose

Section 1: The name of this program shall be the Mid-East Working Group of St. Mark's Church. It shall also be hereafter referred to as the MEWG.

Section 2: The Mid-East Working Group sees its mission as being firmly grounded in our faith tradition at several levels: that of the Hebrew Scriptures, the New Testament, and the teachings of Jesus Christ, as well as that of the world-wide Christian community, the Episcopal Church, and the Episcopal Diocese of Washington.*

Section 3: The purpose of the Mid-East Working Group shall be:

To work for peace, reconciliation, and justice for the people of Palestine and Israel by promoting greater understanding of historic and current issues in the Middle East, partnering with peace-seeking individuals and groups in all faith communities, both here and abroad, supporting our Anglican brothers and sisters in the Holy Land, promoting the relevant policies adopted by The Episcopal Church, and recommending that St. Mark's advocate for additional, appropriate policies and actions by The Episcopal Church and the U.S. government.

To fulfill this purpose, the Mid-East Working Group could undertake the following activities:

- a. Explore and proclaim the universal principles of peace and justice that are at the heart of our Christian faith tradition
- b. Provide opportunities for the members of St. Mark's to learn about the causes of conflict and the opportunities for peace in Israel and Palestine
- c. Educate members of the parish and others about the policies and actions of The Episcopal Church and the Diocese of Washington pertaining to Palestine and Israel
- d. Explore the possibility of developing an ongoing relationship between St. Mark's and a parish in the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, including opportunities for pilgrimages to the Holy Land
- e. Bring to the attention of parishioners advocacy positions, actions, and organizations that they may wish to support as individuals
- f. Seek Vestry approval for any actions not aligned with the policies of The Episcopal Church and for St. Mark's membership in appropriate non-profit groups or coalitions

Article II: Membership and Management

Section 1: Membership in the St. Mark's Working Group shall be open to all pledging members in the parish.

Section 2: On a biannual basis, the Mid-East Working Group shall elect two co-chairs to serve a two year term. The co-chairs shall appoint a Coordinating Committee of between five and seven members and designate one of them to serve as Secretary/Treasurer for the group. All members of the Coordinating Committee shall serve a two-year term of office beginning at the time of Shrine Mont each June.

* See the Addendum "Scriptural and Ecclesiastical Context"

Section 3: The Co-chairs shall have the responsibility to:

- a. Convene and preside at monthly meetings of the Coordinating Committee
- b. Represent the MEWG to the Vestry, to the Pillars, and to outside groups as appropriate
- c. Prepare an annual report to the Vestry and an annual budget submission, if so directed
- d. Ensure that any funds handled by the Working Group follow St. Mark's procedures
- e. Ensure that there is effective communication of MEWG activities throughout the parish

Article III: Policy Procedures

Before submitting any proposal to the Vestry calling for St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Capitol Hill, to take an official public policy position, the Coordinating Committee of the Mid-East Working Group shall convene a meeting of all interested parishioners to discuss the proposal.

Article IV: Amendments

Section 1: Amendments to this charter may be proposed by any member of the Mid-East Working Group.

Section 2: Proposed amendments must be submitted to the Co-Chairs in writing.

Section 3: The Co-Chairs shall provide the members of the Coordinating Committee with a copy of the proposed amendment no fewer than two weeks before the vote.

Section 4: Amendments shall pass with a two-thirds vote of the entire Coordinating Committee. Absent members may be polled by the presiding chairperson if necessary.

Section 5: All amendments adopted by the Coordinating Committee shall be submitted to the Vestry for final approval.

Article V: Ratification

This charter shall take effect upon approval by two-thirds vote of the Coordinating Committee of the Mid-East Working Group and approval by the Vestry of St. Mark's Episcopal Church.

This charter was approved by the Coordinating Committee of the Mid-East Working Group on December 15, 2010. It was approved by St. Mark's Vestry on January 9, 2011.

ADDENDUM

Scriptural and Ecclesiastical Context

The Mid-East Working Group at St. Mark's Church sees its mission as being firmly grounded in our faith tradition: that of the Hebrew Scriptures, the New Testament, and the teachings of Jesus Christ, as well as that of the world-wide Christian community, The Episcopal Church, and the Episcopal Diocese of Washington.

The Scriptures

The Scriptures exhort us repeatedly to love one another, "to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8). We hold fast to God's vision for all humanity, as expressed by Isaiah (2:2-5): "In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established...all nations shall stream to it...they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore." We seek for our actions to become part of the healing stream prophesied by Amos (5:24): "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everlasting stream."

Jesus taught all who would hear him that the peace-makers are truly the children of God. He taught his followers to minister to the needs of the oppressed as if they were freeing him from the abuses of nakedness, hunger, and injustice. We seek to do his work in the world today, striving to bring about peace by confronting injustice with love – striving to bring about the kingdom through right relationships with all human beings.

The Episcopal Church

With the engagement of the Presiding Bishop, as well as lay and clergy at the grassroots, and based on the public policy resolutions passed at General Convention and by the Executive Council, the Episcopal Church continues its commitment to a two-state solution as the only viable avenue to a just peace for both Palestinians and Israelis.

The Church seeks an agreement that guarantees Israel's security and Palestinian aspirations for a viable sovereign state with Jerusalem as the shared capital of both Israel and Palestine.

More specifically, church policy states that or calls for:

- Disputes should be settled by direct negotiations and mutual recognition
- Jerusalem should be safeguarded as an "inter-religious municipality."
- Support should be given to the Diocese of Jerusalem and the diminishing Christian community in the Holy Land through visits to the Christian congregations in the Holy Land and the receiving of visitors from the Holy Land
- All expressions of anti-Arab and anti-Jewish prejudice in our culture and among Christians should be deplored
- Israeli settlements in the occupied territories of the West Bank and East Jerusalem are illegal under international law and an obstacle to peace as is the Israeli wall/fence/barrier which should be removed where it violates Palestinian territory
- There must be an equitable sharing of resources such as water
- Termination of the policy and practice of terrorism by any constituency of the Palestinian Authority
- Assurance of human rights for Palestinians and Israelis

- Supports the return of sovereign control of Gaza's airspace and coastline and borders to the Palestinian people and mutual respect for borders
- Hamas to recognize the State of Israel, renounce violence, and accept past peace agreements
- Directs the Social Responsibility in Investments Committee to engage in dialogue with and, where appropriate, to file shareholder resolutions with companies which operate in the Occupied Territories, in which the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society (DFMS) owns shares and whose products or services contribute to violence against either side, or contribute to the infrastructure that supports and sustains the Occupation, such as settlements and their bypass roads, the security barrier where it is built on Palestinian land, and demolition of Palestinian homes
- Recommends that bodies of the Episcopal Church with investment assets join with other religious organizations, denominations and institutions in investing in the economic infrastructure of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Resolutions can be found at

http://archive.episcopalchurch.org/globalJustice/109339_107632_ENG_HTML.htm

Statement by Presiding Bishop Jefferts-Schori June 15, 2010:

http://www.episcopalchurch.org/78703_122948_ENG_HTML.htm

The Episcopal Diocese of Washington

St. Mark's Mid-East Working Group sees its work both within our parish and in conjunction with those beyond our walls as responding to the repeated calls by the General Convention and the Executive Council that all Episcopalians both pray for and work for peace in the Holy Land.

Similarly, we believe that our work can, at the least, complement, and perhaps also directly support the recent relationship created between the Episcopal Diocese of Washington and the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem. During his pilgrimage to the Holy Land in the fall of 2009, Bishop John Bryson Chane reached agreement with his counterpart, Bishop Suheil Dawani, for a three-year companion relationship between the two dioceses. On January 12, 2010, the Diocesan Council in Washington approved the agreement.

Bishop Chane has appointed a Diocesan Partnership Committee to propose specific ways in which the relationship can be developed. The Committee currently has four working groups: Education, Health, Parish-to-Parish Relationships, and Advocacy. The working groups will seek to engage parishes in the Diocese in supporting the schools and hospitals administered by the Diocese of Jerusalem, establishing ties with parishes in Palestine and Israel, and advocating for American policies and programs that will promote reconciliation, economic and social justice, interfaith relations, and women's issues in the Holy Land.

The Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem

There has been an Anglican presence in Jerusalem and the Holy Land for over 150 years, with the first Anglican Church (Christ Church, Jaffa Gate) dedicated in 1845. 1976 saw the selection of the first Palestinian Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem, The Right Rev'd Faek Haddad. On April 15th, 2007, the 14th Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem was enthroned, the Right Rev'd Suheil Dawani.

The Diocese extends over five countries, including Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Palestine and Israel. There are 27 parishes that minister to the needs of their communities, centered on the Cathedral Church of St. George the Martyr in Jerusalem. There are about 30 priests and 7,000 Anglicans across the Diocese. The church employs some 1,500 people and supports 30 institutions, including two hospitals (one in Gaza and

one in Nablus), clinics, kindergartens and schools, vocational training programs, as well as institutions for the deaf, the disabled and the elderly. They serve all people, regardless of faith.

St. George's College Jerusalem is part of the Diocese and is adjacent to the Cathedral Church of St. George. Students come from all over the world to study the bible and Christian history in the context of pilgrimage and travel.

The American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem play an important part in supporting the institutions there. AFEDJ raises funds for and promotes the humanitarian work of the Diocese of Jerusalem and its institutions so it may better serve the needs of all people in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Palestine and Israel.

There are important partnerships, formal and informal, between churches in the Holy Land and in the United States, as well as diocese to diocese, including the Diocese of Washington.

Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem - <http://www.j-diocese.org/>

American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem - <http://www.americanfriends-jerusalem.org>

St. George's College - <http://www.sgcjerusalem.org/home.asp>