

THE
Episcopal
CHURCH



Office of Public Affairs

The Pastoral Letter

In the spirit of our understanding of Jerusalem as the Holy City of Peace, we call on all Episcopalians to hear the words of our Presiding Bishop, “As we pray for the peace of Jerusalem, as the Bible teaches us, we must find ways to work for the peace of Jerusalem, which will be found where there is true equity for all, true justice for all, and true freedom for everyone. Here it is clear that this is not simply an idealistic dream. It is the only hope, and we must not rest until it is realized.”

The peace of Jerusalem is a promise not yet attained, but it is proclaimed by the prophets of all three Abrahamic faiths. Their words embody principles of love, humility, forgiveness, putting others first, and a preference for the marginalized.

We can have little doubt that Jesus commands us to lift up those who are oppressed, hold accountable any who misuse their power, abhor the use of violence, exhibit penitence and offer accountability for sins that governments have done on our behalf, and act always in the spirit of peace with justice.

In this quest for peace and justice full respect must be accorded to the civil rights and religious interests of all persons and all holy places in the city must be equally protected and accessible to faithful Jews, Christians, and Muslims, and to all people of goodwill.

We remind ourselves that Christians have an obligation to devote ourselves to renewed ecumenical and interfaith discernment and collaboration in the spirit of our shared values. Jerusalem should be honored as a community for all Jews, Christians, and Muslims, and serve as a symbol and a focal point for such work as the Holy City continues to exert its theological and spiritual authority as a sacred space of ultimate reconciliation and unity. Now is the time to work toward a unity of perspective on Middle East peace and justice with our Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant siblings, as well as with the Jewish and Muslim communities who share our hope for peace. Our journey as the children of the Abrahamic traditions is a journey to a future built on shared values and commitments for the common good of all who call Jerusalem and the Holy Land their home.

Deeper communion with those in the region who already work for peace is also vital. Scores of organizations work at the grass roots on behalf of freedom, dignity, and economic opportunity for all, promoting mutual understanding across barriers of cultural and religious difference. Their efforts deserve the Church’s understanding and support.

In all this work, our permanent partners are the Christian communities in the Holy Land, especially the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem. As the numbers of Palestinian Christians continue to decline, the region loses more potential bridge-builders and conciliators, as well as an integral part of the diverse landscape. We pray that our Church will encourage them to persevere, learn more about the region's historical complexities, deepen our ties with its people and peace-building institutions, and promote ecumenical and interfaith peace with justice.

We offer this letter for the sake of God's people, especially those in Israel and Palestine, whose faces are lit by neighborly light from the holy city of God itself. Why Jews, Christians, and Muslims have been called to live together in Jerusalem and the Holy Land is a mystery known only to God. But it is our responsibility as those who are part of the family of the children of Abraham to do all in our power to further and to deepen the commitment to peace with justice, and to its realisation. We ask all to join with us and with the Psalmist: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; may they prosper who love you. Peace be within your walls and quietness within your towers. For my brethren and companions' sake, I pray for your prosperity; because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek to do you good."

An Addendum to Pastoral Letter

At the 79th General Convention of the Episcopal Church in Austin, Texas, The Episcopal Church, as it had over the past four decades, continued to address the complexity and contentious difficulties in the Middle East by resolutions. Among the adopted resolutions was B003, affirming the Church's belief that Israel and Palestine should share Jerusalem as their capital and encouraging the whole Church "to engage earnestly in education, advocacy, and prayer for the renewal of a diplomatic and political process for peace in the region, and for the peace of Jerusalem." The resolution called on the House of Bishops to offer a pastoral letter "supporting Jerusalem's prophetic identity as the Holy City of Peace."