



Concept note for 2019 World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel (WWPPI)

Background

Each year during the week that includes the International Day of Peace (21 September), churches, related organizations, congregations, and people of faith are encouraged to participate in worship services, educational events, and acts of support for a just and sustainable peace for both Palestinians and Israelis.

Date

15-22 September 2019

Theme

“Humanity and equality in God’s creation”

The ongoing conflict and injustice in Palestine and Israel has created victims from all communities. This situation affects the future for everyone in the region, denies the equal human dignity of all people, and in all aspects of God’s creation. Though we are all created equally in God’s image, the military occupation and its discriminatory practices and impacts on entire Palestinian communities is an obstacle to the fullness of life for all in God’s creation.

“Just as we affirm the right of the State of Israel to exist and Jewish people’s right to self-determination, so do we assert the equal right of Palestinian people to the realization of their rights to self-determination in a viable state on the territories occupied since 1967, and with Jerusalem as a shared city for two peoples and three faiths. Just as we categorically denounce antisemitism as sin against God and humanity, so do we reject discrimination, marginalization, collective punishment and violence against Palestinian people on the basis of ethnicity, race or religion also as sin against God and humanity.” (WCC Executive Committee public statement on *Ecumenical Accompaniment for a Just Peace in Palestine and Israel*, May 2019)

It is the ecumenical movement’s calling and appeal to seek peace in the land of Christ’s birth – a peace that is founded on justice, rather than on violence, bloodshed and exclusion by one against the other, or the perpetual imposition of military occupation and control of an entire people.

This theme should concern all Christians and people of good will in every part of the world, in a time of increasing racism, xenophobia, stigmatization and exclusion driven by populist politics. Indeed, through this theme, the aim is to inspire and revive concern for the human dignity of all people equally, regardless of ethnic, religious or political differences, and the struggle for the realization of the equal and inalienable human rights of all.

In the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the unfulfilled search for sustainable peace based on the recognition of the inalienable human rights of all people in the region, this theme has a special immediacy.

Suggested Bible texts

Gen. 1:26-28: God created man in his likeness and image.

Gen. [2:15](#): God gives man a mandate to bring order to creation

Mark 12:31: Love your neighbor as yourself

Gal. [3:28](#): No male or female; no free or slave; no Jew or Gentile

Acts 10:34-35: Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right."

Luke [4:16-19](#): The message of liberation

Mark 2:27: Man is more important than the law. "Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."

Hebrew 13:1-3: "Keep on loving one another as brothers and sister. Do not forget to show hospitality to the strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it."

Prayer

All: We cry to You in prayer, Lord, for our sisters and brothers in Palestine and Israel who are paralyzed by injustice, fear and violence. For those who live with suspicion instead of hope and uncertainty instead of security.

Leader: We long for your holy and life-giving spirit to give us all hope again and keep up our commitment to create a lasting peace in the Holy Land.

A: Where the hearts are stubborn and tired, where political prisoners are separated from their loved ones, where despaired families have been forced to leave their homes where children cannot go to school without risking being subjected to violence, where farmers cannot harvest their crops without risk harassment.

L: God let your love and life-giving power flow; Encourage, release, and protect all your children who fight to keep the hope alive.

A: When despair and hopelessness lead to deeper gaps between us all, when young people see violence as the only way out, when parents struggling to support their families are forced to borrow money they cannot pay back.

L: God our refuge and our strength, restore the hope of those who suffer during the daily tribulation of occupation and support those struggling to cope with everyday life on both sides of the conflict. Lead them from despair to hope and fill their hearts with your light.

A: Where bullets, knives, tear gas and grenades control, where hatred leads to unconditional violence and where desperation gets its outlet in meaningless aggressiveness.

L: We pray that we all can see the image of God in one another, so that we can recognize humanity in each other. Challenge both Israelis and Palestinians to follow a non-violence path in order to put an end to occupation and give power to those who dare to stand up for peace.

A: Merciful God, you alone can take away our indifference to each other and give us the ability to see each other as humans of flesh and blood. Do this, and especially among those who have the

power to make a difference in the land we call the holy one. Let your spirit touch children, young people, mothers, dads, prime ministers, prisoners and armed forces.

L: Let our hearts and minds be filled with your peace and give us the strength to work for peace and grace to inspire others into a life of hope.

A: God of the oppressed and expelled, God, you heal and restore through Jesus Christ. In this day which should be, could be and ought to be, a day of joy and real celebrations of two independent and neighboring countries, believe us to live in joy and confidence, until the day when Christ returns.

L: Amen

References for reflections

The following quotations and references are offered to inspire reflection upon the theme *Humanity and equality in God's creation*. Other quotations and references may be identified as a basis for reflection in Bible groups, prayer groups, congregational gatherings etc.

General Secretary WCC Olav Fykse Tveit

"We share a common humanity under God. Such an understanding - that each member of humanity is a valued creation of God's act of love - inspires Christians to cherish the sanctity of each human being."

"The evil influence of racism in the world today challenges us all, whatever our faith may be, to work out in practice what it means truly to love all our human sisters and brothers, and to seek for them the experience of justice and peace in their daily lives that we would also wish for ourselves."

Justice and Peace commission of the Catholic Ordinary – New Vision 2017

"Enlarge your vision and your hearts. Change the situation. Shake it out of its immobility. There is enough space in the land for us all. Let all have the same dignity and equality. No occupation and no discrimination. Two peoples living together and loving each other according to the way they choose. They are able to love each other and to make peace together."

We pray that hearts hardened by hatred and violence and eyes narrowed by power and fear of the other will be opened for new paths to peace, in which the God-given dignity and value of every human being can be equally recognized and respected.

[Statement on 50 Years of Occupation, WCC Executive Committee, June 2017](#)

In the midst of violence and division, the ecumenical movement seeks to offer a word of hope, faith and love, encouraging and supporting actions for peace with justice.

[Statement on the Israeli and Palestinian Conflict and Peace Process, WCC Central Committee, June 2016](#)

As a city of two nations revered by the faithful of three religions, [Jerusalem] needs to be the place that models for the world the possibilities of living together peacefully in mutual respect.

Statement affirming the Christian presence and witness in the Middle East, WCC Tenth Assembly, Busan, October 2013

From religious scriptures (Faith for Rights, OHCHR):

Islam:

“Had God willed, He would have made you a single community, but He wanted to test you regarding what has come to you. So compete with each other in doing good. Every one of you will return to God and He will inform you regarding the things about which you differed.” (Qu’ran 5, 48)

Judaism:

“Whoever preserves one life, is considered by Scripture as if one has preserved the whole world.” (Talmud, Sanhedrin, 37,a).

Christianity:

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28)

Additional prayers:

يا رب يا من ملأت أجران الماء من نِعْمِكَ أروي عطشنا،
يا من أشبعت الخمسة آلاف أشبع جوعنا، وأهلنا أن ندعى ورثةً لمُلْكِكَ.
أمطر يا رب علينا بركتك الأبوية في هذه الأيام، لكي ينمو قلبنا حبًا للإنسانية جمعاء،
قوي فينا فضيلة المحبة فنحمل السلام لكل إنسان،
إملأنا من العدل كما ملأت أجران الماء من الحياة، فنكون رسل سلام للجميع.
فيا معطي الخلاص اسكب في قلوبنا ولو قطرة واحدة من محبتك فتضطرم قلوبنا نار للأخوة الصالحة، لنعيش في عدلٍ وسلام وونام وأخوة
مع الخليقة والإنسانية جمعاء.
أمين.

Prayer of humanity and justice

O Lord, who filled the water jars with your grace, Please fulfill our thirst,
O Lord who fed the five thousand, free us from our famine, So that we can be called heirs to your kingdom.

"O Lord, Bless us these days, so that our hearts may grow in love to all humanity.

Strengthen in us the virtue of love, so we carry peace to every human being,
Fill us with justice, as You filled the jars with life, so we become your messengers of
peace for all.

Our Savior, we ask you to pour into our hearts even one drop of your love, so our hearts
will light fire of good brotherhood, to live in justice, peace, harmony and fraternity with
creation and all humanity. Amen.

Special prayer for WWPPI 2019 by Patriarch Sabbah

اللهم، خالقنا على صورتك ومثالك،

خلقتنا متساوين في الإنسانية والكرامة،

هَبْ لَنَا جَمِيعًا أَنْ نَرَكَ، فَنَرَى فِي كُلِّ إِنْسَانٍ أَخًا وَأُخْتًا لَنَا، لِأَنَّهُ ابْنُكَ وَصَنَعَ يَدَيْكَ.

اللهم تطلّع من السماء وانظر،

أبناؤك يقتتلون، ويقتلون.

وكثيرون جوع وعطاش إلى الخبز وإلى العدل والمساواة.

هذه حالنا في هذه الأرض المقدسة وفي كل منطقتنا.

تطلّع اللهم من السماء وانظر وارحمننا،

وأفض نورك في كل القلوب لنرى أننا جميعًا إخوة لأننا أبناؤك وبناتك،

فنكفّ عن الاقتتال، ويكفّ الظالمون عن ظلمهم،

ويذكروا أننا كلنا متساوين في الكرامة التي منحتنا إياها منذ خلقتنا.

اللهم، امنحنا من صلاحك ومحبتك،

وامنحنا القوة لنزيل الموت من بيننا، ونُنَبِّتَ العدل والسلام والمساواة في أرضك المقدسة.

أمين.

البطريك ميشيل صباح - Patriarch Emeritus Michel Sabbah

Oh God, our Creator on your image and your example,

You created us equal in humanity and dignity,

Let us all see you, and we shall see all humanity as our brothers and sisters, because we
are your children and the creation of your hands.

O Lord, look from heaven and see,

Your children are fighting, and they are either killing or being killed.

Many are starving for bread, and for justice and equality too.
This is our situation in this Holy Land and throughout our region.
Look down God from heaven and see and have mercy,
And shine your light in all hearts to see that we are all brothers because we are your sons
and daughters,
That we stop fighting, and the oppressors stop their injustices,
To remember that we are all equal in the dignity that has been given to us since our
creation.
Oh God, grant us your goodness and love,
And give us the strength to remove death from among us, and live justice, peace and
equality in your holy land.

Amen.