

Community of Christ and Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP)

Andrew Bolton began attending Churches for Middle East Peace conferences in Washington DC in his role as Coordinator for Peace and Justice Ministries in Community of Christ. He appreciated the ecumenical nature of CMEP, its moderate, evenhanded stance and its informed and diligent quest for peace in the trouble Middle East. In 2014 Andrew and Jewell Bolton with Chrystal Vanel from France went on a study tour with CMEP/Mejdi dual narrative tours. We met both Israelis and Palestinians working for peace with justice in the Holy Lands and learn more about the complexities of the occupation of Palestinians by Israel.

At this time Chrystal Vanel was a member of the World Church Peace and Justice Team and successful brought a resolution to the 2016 World Conference:

Resolved, That Community of Christ specifically declares its belief in the love of God for Muslims and Jews, and we denounce all Islamophobia and anti-Semitism; and be it further

Resolved, That Community of Christ join with other Christian, Jewish, Muslim, ecumenical, and secular peace movements in the call for peace in Israel and Palestine. We, with other Christians, call for the right of the State of Israel to exist in secure borders; for the cessation of Israeli military occupation and illegal settlements in the West Bank; and for the recognition of the State of Palestine (in accordance with 1947 UN General Assembly Resolution 181/II, 1967 UN Security Council Resolution 242, and 1988 UN General Assembly Resolution 43/177).

(WCR 1311 Palestine and Israel, Adopted June 10, 2016):

This resolution calls for a non-partisan and even-handed approach to the conflict. It recognizes the key issues in the long-standing conflict that need to be addressed: the right of Israel to exist within secure borders, the end of Israeli military occupation and illegal settlements in the West Bank, and the recognition of the State of Palestine in light of the UN resolutions referred to.

Our enduring principles of the **worth of all persons, responsible choices** and **pursuit of shalom peace** are the values on which we stand, informed by the life and ministry of Jesus Christ who walked and lived in the Holy Land. The mission initiative **Pursue Peace on Earth** calls us to action.

The work of the Israel/Palestine subteam of the World Church Peace and Justice Team continued. It concluded that education of church members about Israel/Palestine should be the priority.

To expand educational opportunities and join with other movements in the call for peace in Israel and Palestine, Community of Christ joined Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) in 2022. Steve Kellogg accepted appointment as the Community of Christ Board Member representative to CMEP.

Following the eruption of the latest conflict in Israel and Gaze on October 7, Community of Christ joined in CMEP organized calls for an end to all violence and comprehensive ceasefire, the immediate release of all hostages held by Hamas and other militant groups and the

release of Palestinian prisoners, granting immediate and adequate humanitarian access to Gaza so that basic needs like water, food, electricity, and health care be provided and not utilized as leverage for political aims, and commitment to a comprehensive resolution in Israel/Palestine that provides equality, human rights, security, and justice for Israelis, Palestinians, and all people of the Middle East.

Steve Kellogg travelled with CMEP Executive Leaders to Israel/Palestine in January 2024 to promote these initiatives and reported on the trip an article for the May/June Herald.



Steve second from right on back row.