

Israel/Palestine Working Group

Basic Information

Contact Name and Details	Rachel Lampard, Team Leader of the Joint Public Issues Team lampardr@methodistchurch.org.uk x5248
Status of Paper	Final
Action Required	Decision
Draft Resolution	The Methodist Council agrees the Terms of Reference and membership of the Israel/Palestine Working Group as set out in paragraphs 3 & 5.
Alternative Options to Consider, if Any	

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	This paper invites Council to set up a Working Group to bring a statement on Israel/Palestine to Conference in 2010
Main Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conference in 2009 passed Notice of Motion 226 asking for a working group to be established to bring to Conference 2010 a statement of the Methodist Church's position on Israel/Palestine, taking into account past resolutions of Conference and international law. • This paper proposes terms of reference and membership for the group.
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	Methodist Conference has previously passed a number of resolutions on Israel/Palestine, and church leaders have issued statements on events in the region. Further details of these may be found here: http://www.methodist.org.uk/index.cfm?fuseaction=openworld.content&cmid=1888
Consultations	Revd Nichola Jones, proposer of the Notice of Motion Dr Stephen Leah, seconder of the Notice of Motion Revd Dr Martyn Atkins, General Secretary and Secretary of Conference

Working Group on Israel/Palestine

Background

1. Methodist Conference 2009 adopted the following Notice of Motion:

7/28 Notice of Motion 226: Israel/Palestine Working Group

Bearing in mind the events of the last 8 months, including the Gaza War and Israeli incursions; the deteriorating conditions of occupation under which Palestinians are forced to live and their request for Christians in the West to visit them and to speak out on their behalf, Conference resolves:

- i) as a matter of urgency to establish a Methodist working group facilitated by the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT), to bring to Conference 2010, a statement of the Methodist Church's position on Israel/Palestine, taking into account past resolutions of Conference and international law;
 - ii) that the Proposer, The Revd Nichola G Jones, and Seconder, Dr Stephen Leah, be part of the working group.
2. It has taken a while to get this paper to Council due to the need to try to seek agreement between the relevant parties.

Terms of Reference

3. The following Terms of Reference for the working group are proposed:

The Working Group on Israel/Palestine shall bring to Conference 2010 a report outlining the Methodist Church's position on Israel/Palestine, taking into consideration:

- a. previous statements on Israel/Palestine made by the Methodist Conference and reports received by Methodist Council or Methodist Conference. Working group members will be asked to affirm that they are in agreement with previously stated Conference positions on the occupation.*
- b. the statements of the Heads of Churches in Jerusalem and other strategic partners*
- c. the context of the current crisis*
- d. the application of international law and human rights instruments*

and make appropriate recommendations for how this statement should be used to inform future work by the Methodist Church.

4. Requests have been received that the group should be "balanced" and contain members who are not in agreement with Conference statements. This is not believed to be a constructive approach given the remit of the group.

Membership of the Group

5. The following membership is proposed for the group:
 - **Revd Graham Carter** (Chair) – former President of the Methodist Conference
 - **Revd Alan Ashton** - over 32 years experience living there and visiting, with family living in the West Bank
 - **Revd Warren Bardsley** – returned accompanier with the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel
 - **Dr Elizabeth Harris** – Senior Lecturer in Comparative Study of Religion, Hope University
 - **Steve Hucklesby** – Policy Adviser, Joint Public Issues Team
 - **Revd Nichola Jones** – member of Friends of Sabeel and frequent traveller
 - **Revd Marian Jones** – frequent traveller with contacts in Israel/Palestine
 - **Dr Stephen Leah** - Peace campaigner with contacts in UK peace and justice community and in Israel/Palestine
 - **Revd Sam McBratney** – involvement in university programme with students from Gaza and Israel
6. A number of other readers or consultants to the group have also been identified to comment on draft work.
7. As the Joint Public Issues Team is a joint venture between the Methodist Church, the Baptist Union and United Reformed Church it is proposed that the Baptist Union and United Reformed Church be invited to participate in the group as observers.

Process

8. It is proposed that the group should aim to meet twice in the autumn of 2009, with work being carried out by email in between meetings, and aim to send a draft report to Methodist Council in February 2010.

Resolution

The Methodist Council agrees the Terms of Reference and membership of the Israel/Palestine Working Group as set out in paragraphs 3 & 5 above.