

Session 5

Jubilee and Peacemakers



The conflict in IOPT is deep-rooted, but there are also many people who are working to build peace. Social media means that both Israeli and Palestinian stories can be heard, by Israelis, Palestinians, and people around the world. Hearing stories from both sides can help build understanding. There are also many organisations working to bring people together and advocate for justice and peace.

Discuss

“True peace is not merely the absence of tension; it is the presence of justice.” – Martin Luther King

What does peace look like? Is it the absence of violence, or does there need to be something else in order for there to be true, lasting peace? What is the role of justice in peacemaking?

Sindyanna

Sindyanna is a fairtrade co-operative that brings Jewish and Arab women together. The women make oil from olives grown in Palestine and sell the olive oil, oil-based products like soap, and crafts. The business supports traditional Palestinian farmers and empowers women by providing them with work and an income. By working together, Jews and Arabs can learn about each other's lives and cultures, and even have the opportunity to learn each other's language. There is also a Visitor's Centre at Sindyanna where Israelis, Palestinians and international tourists can all meet and learn together. In the UK, Sindyanna olive oil is used in products sold by LUSH, and their za'atar spice is sold by Zaytoun.



Bible study

“(God).. will judge between the nations. He'll settle problems among many of them. They will hammer their swords into ploughs. They'll hammer their spears into pruning tools. Nations will not go to war against one another. They won't even train to fight anymore.” Isaiah 2:4

Isaiah teaches us that God wants peace and not war. Sindyanna have transformed an old firing range into an organic olive grove that is run by both Jews and Arabs. Even when there has been pain and violence, this can be transformed into cooperation if both sides work together. How could you find common ground with people you have disagreed with in the past?

EAPPI

The Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine/Israel (EAPPI) is an international programme coordinated by the World Council of Churches and administered in the UK by the Quakers. Ecumenical Accompaniers (EAs) spend time living in IOPT and acting as witnesses to daily life under occupation. If EAs witness human rights abuses, they can report these to the United Nations or other human rights agencies, so their presence helps citizens feel safer.

EAs act as impartial observers, meaning that they have not sided with either Palestinians or Israelis. They are there to advocate for human rights, protect people who are oppressed, and build peace through non-violence.



Discussion

What do you think 'impartial' means? How easy is it to be an impartial observer of things that are happening? Why is it important, do you think, to ensure that you are impartial in this kind of role? How can you judge whether things you read about IOPT are written or reported in a biased way or an impartial way? Why is it important to think about this when you are reading or listening to accounts?



You can read more about EAPPI on their website www.eappi.org/en/. You can read some of their reports there. Or watch this video about their work https://youtu.be/voVG_kWv2Gk (16:18) or https://youtu.be/3b6x3_8lg9E (2:48)

Peace Collage

Using magazines, newspapers, or printouts from the internet, cut out pictures or words that remind you of 'peace'. Make a collage on a large sheet of paper that you can display in your church. As a starting point, you could use the picture of a dove in a bullet-proof vest that Banksy graffitied onto the separation barrier.

Watch this video about Jerusalem Peace Players – two girls who get to know one another by playing netball. <https://youtu.be/MOUNdwjFKmw>

Solutions Not Sides

Solutions Not Sides is an education programme that runs in the UK. It aims to teach people about the Israel-Palestine Conflict and tackle antisemitism (prejudice towards Jews) and Islamophobia (prejudice towards Muslims). The aim is to find a solution, not to take sides! Facilitators lead workshops in schools or youth groups. In these workshops, students can learn about the history of the conflict, hear the perspectives of both Israelis and Palestinians, and think about how we can help build peace.



One of the most important things that people in the UK can do is to learn about the experiences of both Israelis and Palestinians and to encourage other people to learn more. By doing so, we can support people who are suffering (show 'solidarity') and also let our politicians know that we want them to find solutions that work for everyone, not one side over the other.

You could ask your teacher or youth group leader to arrange a Solutions Not Sides workshop for you.

Or, who you met in the previous session, met a Palestinian for the first time through Solutions Not Sides. He said:

"My dialogue partner was also an actor from Ramallah, and it sounds simple because he is just a dude that lived in a different place and speaks a different language, but it was mind blowing because his life was so different from mine. And he lives just there, so close, I can almost see his house from mine, and his life is like a million miles away. And we just talked to each other. He's super nice and we became friends... I was 25 and I had never met a Palestinian. Many Jews go their entire lives without meeting a Palestinian but think they have a firm idea about who they are and what they want, and that they want to harm us. I wish I could take people to show them my friends, family, mother, sisters. Just normal people."

Activity

In small groups, create a drama showing how a 'peacemaker' goes about solving problems and keeping the peace. Think about the different organisations you've learned about in this section. When you're ready, perform your drama for everyone. After the performances, discuss what characteristics of peacemaking were shown in each drama. How could we use these characteristics in our everyday life to help make a difference?

What can WE do?

What can we do in the UK to help the people of IOPT in their quest for a peaceful solution? We may feel there's little we can do to make a difference. But it is important to learn what we can and keep informed, maybe even hosting a talk by Solutions Not Sides or EAPPI or someone who can give an informed and unbiased view. We can support peace groups in the region (Find out about Women in Black, Palestinian Vision Organization (Palvision), Other Voice, Combatants for Peace, Youth Against Settlements, Al-Haq, Yesh Din, Addameer Prisoner Support and others.) We can campaign and can write to our MPs. We can establish friendship links with young people in or from IOPT and listen to their voices. We can give money through Commitment for Life. And, of course, we can pray. Look at the prayers in the intergenerational celebration in the centre pages of this booklet, or maybe you could write your own.

