

WDC Israel Palestine Task Force Report to WDC Annual Assembly August 1, 2020

<http://mennowdc.org/committees-task-forces/>

Members: Bob Atchison, Katie Mitchell-Koch, Esther Koontz, Kathy Nuefeld-Dunn -WDC Rep

Purpose: To facilitate the implementation of *Seeking Peace in Israel Palestine*, the resolution overwhelmingly passed by Mennonite Church USA in July 2017. To promote education and advocacy to bring peace and justice to the on-going crisis in Gaza, the West Bank and Israel. The Task Force met seven times since the 2019 Annual WDC Assembly.

Activity Highlights

- The task force hosted a display table at the 2019 WDC Annual Assembly providing Israel-Palestine publication handouts and led a workshop on Israel-Palestine presented by Patty Shelly, Esther Koontz and Bob Atchison.
- **Gaza Initiative** – The current siege of Gaza has created severe restrictions on the availability of food, water, medical care, commerce, and industry causing the Task Force to join the efforts of [MennoPIN](#) to bring attention to their humanitarian crisis.
- **Mennonite Twinning Initiative with Gaza** – This Initiative matches Mennonite congregations with churches, mosques, hospitals or schools in Gaza to foster relationships, to pray for each other, to share the story of Gazans suffering, to channel gifts and resources through shared action plans, to educate & discern appropriate responses and to contact legislators to affect policy change. So far there are two WDC churches participating, Manhattan Mennonite Church and Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church.
- **Manhattan Mennonite Church and Youth Vision Society** – Manhattan Mennonite Church is the first church to participate in Gaza Twinning. Since December 2019 the Peace, Service and Witness Committee has participated in 14 Zoom meetings with the Youth Vision Society in Gaza. The [Youth Vision Society](#) is a non-profit association, that works in the field of capacity building, culture, arts, human rights, social improvement, and civic participation.
- **Hand to Hand** - The Gaza Strip is one of the most densely populated polity's in the world, with more than two million people. It is just a matter of time before the Corona virus spreads. Suffering from a 13-year air, land, and sea blockade and three devastating wars, Gaza faces economic collapse. The poor earn their living daily and yet need to stay home because of the pandemic. [Hand-to-Hand](#) is fund raising project through the Youth Vision Society to feed the most vulnerable Gazans. A \$75 gift will feed a family for 2 weeks. Hand to Hand will distribute: 300 food baskets and 300 hygiene kits with cleaning supplies to slow the spread of COVID-19. Donations to the Youth Vision Society (YVS) can be made on-line through the Middle Eastern Children's Alliance (MECA) at <https://secure.everyaction.com/JkiApGXBskq8WNeoIrDQ7w2>. At the time of writing this report **\$6,073 dollars** has been raised toward the **\$37,000 goal**.
- **Christian Zionism** – Another focus of the Task Force this year is to provide education on the harmful effects of Christian Zionism to the Palestinian people. This has taken the form of sermons, biblical understanding of what it means to be a “chosen” people and Mennonite’s complicity in the Holocaust.
- **“Stories from Palestine” Webinar** — To celebrate the International Day of Peace on **September 21**, the Task Force will be hosting an hour-long webinar featuring peace and justice stories surrounding the Palestine-Israel conflict. Jonathan Kuttub will be one of the featured speakers.