

## **WDC Israel Palestine Task Force**

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

**Bob Atchison**

**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 shared their annual report and a video on the Hand-to-Hand project at the 2020 WDC Annual Assembly. The Hand-to-Hand project has raised over \$9,000 for the Youth Vision Society in Gaza to distribute food baskets and COVID supplies to the Beach Refugee Camp.
- **Racial Justice from Palestine to the United States** – The killing of George Floyd and the simmering racial injustice that pervades America called the task force to stand in solidarity with communities of color here and around the world by hosting a Facebook Live panel discussion September 21, 2021, the International Day of Peace. The event described racial injustice in the United States and its connection to Israel Palestine. It also provided an update on the current political situation, how Christian Zionism is inherently tied to racism, and the resistance work of Jews of color, Afro-Palestinians, Black internationalists and African Americans who are putting their lives on the line. Featured speakers included Palestinians Alex Awad and Jonathan Kuttab and US citizen Sarah Nahar. 154 people registered for the event.
- **Virtual Discussion to Bring Peace and Justice to Palestine** – On April 13, 2021, our task force hosted an hour-long informal virtual discussion with WDC church members. The discussion featured an update on [Gaza Twinning](#) with Manhattan Mennonite Church, Current Conditions in Gaza, followed by break out room conversations. In addition to task force members several people from MennoPIN's steering committee presented and led breakout groups. These included Jonathan Kuttab, Joe Roos and Lydia Brenneman. There were around 20 participants.
- **Manhattan Mennonite Church and Youth Vision Society** – Since December of 2019, members of Manhattan Mennonite Church's Peace, Service and Witness Team have been participating in MennoPIN's Twinning Initiative with Gaza. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of bi-monthly Zoom meetings with a non-profit organization called the [Youth Vision Society](#). The Youth Vision Society oversees the Edward Said Library and since its inception in 2009 has completed over 26 different projects that provide economic empowerment of women, psychological support for vulnerable children, education for youth and humanitarian aid. In addition to members of the Peace, Service and Witness Team, Lydia Brenneman, MennoPIN Steering Committee member, has also joined the meetings serving as a translator for Arabic and Palestinian culture. Though initially there were a number of participants from Youth Vision Society, most meetings are hosted by Tareq Abuhmila and sometimes Executive Director Iyad El Ejil. The meetings are very informal and help to create relationships between YVS and MMC. During most meetings, YVS shares information on their projects and how the pandemic has affected lives and families. We have sometimes shared music, politics, favorite foods and books.

MMC has assisted YVS with grant writing to the US Consulate in Jerusalem and written support letters to non-profit organizations in the US encouraging project partnerships. Paul Nuefeld Weaver, Professor & Director of Global Education at Bluffton University, has joined in grant writing and connecting Bluffton students with young adults in Gaza.

- **Violence in May 2021** – The task force mourns over the recent violence and destruction and invites contributions to [Hand to Hand](#), <https://secure.everyaction.com/JkiApGXBskq8WNeoIrDQ7w2>, a fund raising project through the Youth Vision Society to feed the most vulnerable Gazans.