



## Who We Are:

We are Christians from across Ontario committed to the message and teachings of Jesus. Accordingly, we desire to see our theology upholding the dignity and equality of all people. Therefore, we work to pursue justice and peace for both Israelis and Palestinians. We are individuals engaged in this work within our local communities who came together in the spring of 2024 with a shared prayer and desire: to see our local churches engage in the conversation around Palestine/Israel, even if it may be difficult and uncomfortable. We believe the Church must not be silent as we witness the atrocities being committed. We must speak out and actively wrestle with how our beliefs and actions have contributed to injustice and violence. And we must pray.

We invite your church to join us in this call to prayer.

In Peace,

Christians for Just Peace - Barrie & Owen Sound, [info@ChristiansforJustPeace.com](mailto:info@ChristiansforJustPeace.com)

Mennonite Action Ontario, [mennoniteactionontario@gmail.com](mailto:mennoniteactionontario@gmail.com)

Christians for a Free Palestine: Toronto, [c4fp.to@gmail.com](mailto:c4fp.to@gmail.com)

Simcoe County KAIROS, [kairos.simcoecounty@gmail.com](mailto:kairos.simcoecounty@gmail.com)

York Region KAIROS, [cherilyn.spraakman@gmail.com](mailto:cherilyn.spraakman@gmail.com)

For more information, please contact one of the groups listed above.

## The Ask:

As we enter a new year and continue to witness this ongoing devastation, can we commit to taking a few minutes on Sunday, January 26, 2025, to pray with churches across Ontario for a just peace for Palestinians and Israelis? The week of prayer for Christian Unity is celebrated January 18-25, so this feels quite timely.

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# How Can We Be Silent?

## A Call to Prayer for Ontario Churches

We have now witnessed over 14 months of immense human suffering in Palestine and Israel. Before this, we saw 7 decades of violence and increasing military control by Israel beginning in 1948 that precipitated the horrendous attacks on October 7.<sup>1</sup> Such violence and bloodshed break the heart of God, who lovingly created each Palestinian and Israeli in God's very own image, bestowing dignity and worth upon every human life.

While many churches have faithfully lifted Israelis and their grief, pain and loss before God, many churches have remained silent in the face of Palestinian suffering:

- Over 52,030 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's bombardment of Gaza in the past year, including those presumed dead under the rubble. Around 70% of those are women and children.<sup>2</sup>
- B'Tselem, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, believes that Israel is committing the war crime of starvation in the Gaza Strip.<sup>3</sup>
- Save the Children reports that more than 10 children a day, on average, have lost one or both of their legs in Gaza since the bombardment began.<sup>4</sup>
- Israel has killed more than 250 humanitarian workers, 500 medical workers and 116 journalists.<sup>5</sup>
- Israeli officials have indefinitely detained 300 doctors and 54 journalists have been arrested.<sup>6</sup>
- B'Tselem continues to report on the widespread torture used by Israeli authorities in places of detention where over 9000 Palestinians are held without charge or trial.<sup>7</sup>

The suffering of the Palestinians is unimaginable. **How can we be silent?**

Our Palestinian siblings in the faith have been heartbroken by the silence of the Western Church. Palestinian followers of Christ - who have been there since the days of Jesus - are under threat of extinction. Munther Isaac, an Evangelical Palestinian pastor in Bethlehem, wants Christians in the West to understand that the Palestinian Christian community is truly under attack. "I don't want to talk about hope right now. That may sound unchristian, but at this stage, we're just trying to survive and live day by day. The people of Gaza are finding strength in one another and in their faith in God. They know they can't rely on anything else," says Isaac.<sup>8</sup>

**How can we be silent?** As Christians, we are called to love not only our neighbours, but even our enemies. This means no matter which side we sympathize with, Jesus calls us to love them, to clothe them, to bring them food and water, to visit them in prison. But we can't love them while standing by as violence is unleashed on them. Jesus showed us that love is active.

Join with Christians across Ontario on Sunday January 26, 2025, as we offer this 4-minute prayer of lament and grief, and call for justice and peace for all Palestinians and Israelis - all Christians, Jews and Muslims living in the land. May we express this prayer not only with our words, but with our heart; not only with our heart, but with our hands and feet - as Jesus taught us.

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*We recognize each church is in a different place with their pursuit of justice for all people in the land. We believe that pursuing justice in the land requires that we understand the historical and current suffering of the Palestinian people. We honour the various parts of the journey that our congregations are on, and invite the consideration: what is the next step in praying for justice for Palestinians in your church? In the third stanza of this prayer, we offer three wording options highlighted in the text below. We invite you to choose the one that will best support your congregation in taking the next step. One of our members has also contributed a call-and-response version of the prayer that might also be a good fit for your community. Let us know your church will be joining us in prayer on January 26th:*

<https://forms.gle/7eV4jkAy4TydTb5j6>

# How Can We Be Silent?

## *Sunday Morning Prayer*

God of justice and compassion,

We cry out to you for the people of Palestine - from Gaza to the West Bank to the refugee camps and global diaspora - and especially those living under constant bombardment from Israel. We pray for a permanent ceasefire, an end to this bloodshed. We pray for food, water, and medical aid to flow freely and for the flow of weapons to stop. We pray for the release of all hostages, prisoners, and those held captive under the Israeli occupation. We pray for those displaced from their homes, that they may return safely. We pray for those grieving the loss of loved ones, that they may be comforted and protected.

May the Palestinian people, made in your image, know your comfort and love. And let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream.

God of justice and compassion,

We pray for the Jewish people living in Israel and across the world, for peace and safety. We pray for those displaced from their homes, seeking refuge from rocket attacks. We pray for those still held hostage by Hamas, that they would be set free. And we pray that they may find healing and the restoration of hope in the months ahead. We pray for those grieving the loss of those they once held close, those that never returned home.

May the Jewish people, made in your image, know your comfort and love. And let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-ending stream.

God of justice and compassion,

We continue to pray for a just and peaceful tomorrow for Palestinians and Israelis, a future of liberation for all.

We pray for an end to the Israeli military occupation that has spanned over 7 decades, desecrating the image of God in Palestinians through the stripping of their freedoms, the dispossession of their homes and land, and the denial of their self-determination.

OR

We pray for an end to the unjust systems of military and political control that have desecrated the image of God in Palestinians for the last 7 decades.

OR

We grieve and decry the long-standing mistreatment and suffering endured by the Palestinian people as a result of unjust Israeli policies.

We pray that the walls of separation would be dismantled and that the demonization of the other would cease. We pray for world leaders to see the sanctity of every life and to pursue justice without partiality.

May all people living in the land, each one made in your image, know your comfort and love. And let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream.

God of justice and compassion,

We pray for your church here in the West, that we would actively work for justice, not just for some, but for all. Show us the ways in which we have been partial in our opposition of injustice. Remove the blinders of prejudice and where our zeal is misplaced, meet us on the road to Damascus. Forgive us for reading your Word in a way that hinders us from seeing the face of God in Palestinians. Lead us to the better way of love.

Open our ears to the cries of Palestinian Christians, our siblings in the faith, children of God along with us, loved dearly by Him. May we honour Palestinian Christians, for they are the "Living Stones," tracing their spiritual lineage back to the very first followers of Jesus. They are steadfast stewards of our shared faith in the Holy Land despite immense hardship and persecution. Holy Spirit, clear away anything that would prevent us from wholeheartedly hearing them as they share the injustices they endure as Palestinians and as Christians living under Israeli control. Enable us to empathize with their pain of being abandoned and betrayed by the Western church. Give us a deep love for them, a love that moves us to action, that we might join them as they resist injustice through creative nonviolence. For if one part of the body suffers, the whole body suffers with it. We remember that we are one, bound together in the household of God. We recognize

that in this pursuit of justice for the Palestinians, we love our Israeli siblings, for the peace of Israel is bound together with the peace of Palestine.

May we your church, made in your image, be disquieted, and emboldened to action as we witness the suffering of Palestinians and Israelis. And let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream. Amen.

# How Can We Be Silent?

## **\*Call & Response Sunday Morning Prayer**

**All: God of justice and compassion,**

Leader: We cry out to you for the people of Palestine - from Gaza to the West Bank to the refugee camps and global diaspora - and especially those living under constant bombardment from Israel. We pray for a permanent ceasefire, an end to this bloodshed. We pray for food, water, and medical aid to flow freely and for the flow of weapons to stop. We pray for the release of all hostages, prisoners, and those held captive under the Israeli occupation. We pray for those displaced from their homes, that they may return safely. We pray for those grieving the loss of loved ones, that they may be comforted and protected.

**Congregation: May the Palestinian people, made in your image, know your comfort and love. And let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream.**

**All: God of justice and compassion,**

Leader: We pray for the Jewish people living in Israel and across the world, for peace and safety. We pray for those displaced from their homes, seeking refuge from rocket attacks. We pray for those still held hostage by Hamas, that they would be set free. And we pray that they may find healing and the restoration of hope in the months ahead. We pray for those grieving the loss of those they once held close, those that never returned home.

**Congregation: May the Jewish people, made in your image, know your comfort and love. And let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-ending stream.**

**All: God of justice and compassion,**

Leader: We continue to pray for a just and peaceful tomorrow for Palestinians and Israelis, a future of liberation for all.



We pray for an end to the Israeli military occupation that has spanned over 7 decades, desecrating the image of God in Palestinians through the stripping of their freedoms, the dispossession of their homes and land, and the denial of their self-determination.

OR

We pray for an end to the unjust systems of military and political control that have desecrated the image of God in Palestinians for the last 7 decades.

OR

We grieve and decry the long-standing mistreatment and suffering endured by the Palestinian people as a result of unjust Israeli policies.

We pray that the walls of separation would be dismantled and that the demonization of the other would cease. We pray for world leaders to see the sanctity of every life and to pursue justice without partiality.

**Congregation: May all people living in the land, each one made in your image, know your comfort and love. And let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream.**

**All: God of justice and compassion,**

Leader: We pray for your church here in the West, that we would actively work for justice, not just for some, but for all. Show us the ways in which we have been partial in our opposition of injustice. Remove the blinders of prejudice and where our zeal is misplaced, meet us on the road to Damascus. Forgive us for reading your Word in a way that hinders us from seeing the face of God in Palestinians. Lead us to the better way of love.

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and as Christians living under Israeli control. Enable us to empathize with their pain of being abandoned and betrayed by the Western church. Give us a deep love for them, a love that moves us to action, that we might join them as they resist injustice through creative nonviolence. For if one part of the body suffers, the whole body suffers with it. We remember that we are one, bound together in the household of God. We recognize that in this pursuit of justice for the Palestinians, we love our Israeli siblings, for the peace of Israel is bound together with the peace of Palestine.

**Congregation: May we your church, made in your image, be disquieted, and emboldened to action as we witness the suffering of Palestinians and Israelis. And let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream.**

**All: God of justice and compassion, Amen.**

## Further Resources

Where do churches and faith organizations stand?

- [MCC statement](#) on Gaza
- [United Church](#)
- [Community Peacemaker Teams](#)
- [Presbyterian Church US](#) statement on war in Gaza:
- [Church leaders](#) call for peace in Israel and Palestine
- [Canadian Friends of Sabeel](#)
- You are not forgotten - [Statement of the Roman Catholic Bishops' Conferences](#)

Who are the Christians in Palestine?

- [The Kairos Document](#). The Kairos document is the word of Christian Palestinians to the world about what is happening in Palestine. It outlines their struggle for justice and peace and their call for us, Christians in the West, to examine the ways we have been a part of the problem.
- [Arab Christians urge evangelicals](#) to rethink support for Israel's war
- [Palestinian Christians](#)

What about Hamas/Oct 7?

- [World Council of Churches Statement](#): One year after October 7
- [Condemning All Violence](#) (Mennonite Action)

What is Christian Zionism?

- Friends of Sabeel North America Christian Zionism [Toolkit](#)
- Rev Munther Isaac: Christian Zionism as [Imperial Theology](#):
  - Also on [video](#)
- [With God on Our Side](#) Documentary

Isn't it antisemitic to criticize Israel/Zionism?

- When is criticism of Israel antisemitic? A scholar of modern Jewish history [explains](#).

How can we continue praying for Palestine?

- [MCC Prayer](#) for Palestine & Israel

What are other ways we can help end the suffering in Palestine?

- [BDS Movement](#)
- Advocacy: [Stop Arms Transfers to Israel](#)

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