

ITEM B.105
ACTION ITEM FOR GAC BUSINESS

FOR GAC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S OFFICE USE ONLY			
	A. Evangelism		D. Vocation
X	B. Justice		E. Stewardship
	C. Spirituality		F. Audit
	P. Plenary		
			G. PC (USA), A Corporation
			H. Executive Committee
			I. Personnel Committee

Subject: Comment to Overture 06 to 218th GA (2008)

Recommendation:

The GAC approve the following comment to the 218th General Assembly on Overture 06:

(Comment on Recommendation 3):

Several of our partner Christian and interfaith organizations and institutions in the Middle East have produced statements, resources and other materials that have been helpful in their own efforts to promote mutual understanding and to build healthy and cooperative relations between Christians and other faith communities in the Middle East. Such materials could be exceedingly helpful to our own congregations and members in reaching out in friendship to Jewish and Muslim neighbors, as they model both intentionality and commitment to build communities that seek justice and pursue peace.

(Comment on Recommendation 4):

The Office for the Middle East (World Mission) works collaboratively with various other GAC offices, along with constituency entities such as Mission Networks (for Egypt, Israel/Palestine, Iraq, etc.) and task groups to raise awareness of the Christian presence and witness in the Middle East, paying particular attention to the crisis of dwindling numbers of Christians and the increasing difficulties our partner churches are facing, due to a variety of causes. It is noteworthy that this alarming reality pervades the consciousness of our partners in the region as a primary challenge not only for themselves but also for many of their non-Christian neighbors, and certainly for the world's Christian community.

As one example of our church's response to this crisis, this office – in cooperation with colleagues offices of the General Assembly Council – worked closely with the Israel/Palestine Network for the production of the widely-circulated illustrated booklet, *The Cradle of Our Faith: The Enduring Witness of the Christians of the Middle East*. Now in its second printing, this resource was produced in partial response to an action overwhelmingly passed by the 217th General Assembly (2007) inviting all of our 11,000 congregations to join in “a Week of Prayer and Witness with Christians in the Middle East” during the season between Easter and Pentecost 2007. Many congregations did.

The Middle East Office, together with others, plans to continue to lift up and facilitate awareness of this issue through all available means (e.g., the church's website, mission to the USA opportunities, missionary itineration, etc.) , and within the limitations of staff time and financial resources.

Overture 006*On Peace and Justice in Palestine and Israel*

The Presbytery of Greater Atlanta, having held dialogues with members of the Atlanta Israeli, Palestinian, Islamic, and Jewish communities and with representatives of Israeli and Palestinian human rights organizations, and having an ongoing concern for peace and justice in Palestine/Israel, respectfully overtures the 218th General Assembly (2008) to do the following:

1. Produce a video and study guide—including participants from the Jewish, Islamic, Palestinian, Israeli, and human rights communities (both Israeli and Palestinian)—addressing the questions: “What is your vision for a just peace in Israel/Palestine and how do we achieve it?” and “What can the PC(USA) do to make that vision a reality?”
2. Request Peace and Justice, through the Mission Responsibility Through Investment Committee (MRTI), to produce a guide for congregations and individuals to reflect on their investments in light of biblical and theological principles and to suggest possible actions persons might take in light of those reflections. Such a guide would include the careful process of principled corporate engagement that MRTI has undertaken with regard to peace and justice in Israel/Palestine (the Sept./Oct. 2002 issue of *Church & Society*’s article, “The Presbyterian Church as Investor,” is a helpful starting point).
3. Request World Mission, through its Office for Interfaith Relations and its Office of the Middle East to produce a guide to help Presbyterian congregations and members seek out and live into intentional friendships with Jews, Muslims, and Middle Eastern Christians who reside in their communities.
4. Continue to lift up the plight of the dwindling Christian community throughout the Middle East, recognizing that there are various reasons for the churches’ difficult circumstances, and expressing special concern for those in areas of active military violence. Thus, we will continue to seek ways to support and pray for the Church in the lands of its birth.
5. Urge the president of the United States to appoint a special envoy for Israel/Palestine, based in Jerusalem, to begin immediately as a sign of active, principled U.S. engagement toward solving Israeli-Palestinian abuses and conflicts.