

Congressional Accompaniment Project (CAP) – from East Iowa Presbytery



A hands-on educational experience for members of Congress, their Foreign Policy Aides and their local constituents

The Congressional Accompaniment Project is a program by which Americans, concerned for a just peace in Israel/Palestine, can assist their Congressional representatives and/or their foreign policy Aides to be more informed regarding the “facts on the ground” in Israel/Palestine.

In the midst of this highly charged and crucial area of global peacemaking, the Congressional Accompaniment Project offers an opportunity for local church, ecumenical or community groups to accompany their own Congressional representatives or their principal Aides on a guided fact-finding tour to Israel and Palestine led by the staff of the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center in Jerusalem.

The Congressional Accompaniment Project can be a powerful tool toward assisting members of Congress achieve a more informed, fair and even handed approach to the Middle East. This, in turn, will help to bring an end to the violence, enable just peacemaking in the region, and contribute toward making the American people as well as the people of Israel and Palestine more secure, and the United States more respected among the world of nations.

The Congressional Accompaniment Tour includes meetings with both Israeli and Palestinian governmental officials, American Consulate staff, as well as non-governmental professionals, educators and people in all walks of life. It will include travel in Israel and within the Palestinian West Bank and Gaza Territories to visit areas of conflict and dispute –refugee camps, the “Wall,” housing demolitions, “settlements,” security checkpoints, sacred sites, etc.

This effort is endorsed by a number of religious & human rights groups including the Presbytery of East Iowa of the Presbyterian Church (USA); the Iowa S.E. Lutheran Synod, (ELCA); the Eastern Iowa Coalition for Peace and Justice in Israel/Palestine, Iowa People for Justice in Palestine (PJP), Friends of Sabeel North America and the Sabeel Ecumenical Christian Liberation Theology Center in Jerusalem. It is conducted in accordance with the peacemaking purposes and goals of the Presbyterian Church (USA) among others.

Contact East Iowa Presbytery Peacemaking at (319) 354-7877 or email <mailto:sue-dy@avalon.net> for further information. The 2007 tour, open to all, is scheduled during the congressional Spring recess, **March 31 to April 10, 2007**

The “Congressional Accompaniment project” How to proceed



The Congressional Accompaniment Project is a locally or regionally initiated effort by members of religious, human rights, and peace organizations to recruit the Foreign Policy Aides of their own congressional Representatives and Senators to join them on a fact-finding tour to Israel/Palestine.

Step One:

Begin with a Presbytery, Synod, Conference, Diocesan Peacemaking Committee, Congregation or Human Rights task group decision to adopt and give leadership to the Congressional Accompaniment Project in your Congressional District.

Step Two:

Notify the Congressional Accompaniment Project Coordinator* of your intention to join the 2007 CAP tour. (<mailto:sue-dy@avalon.net>). The CAP Coordinator will arrange international air travel and provide the ground tour logistics (hotel, meals, etc.) and itinerary.

Step Three:

Invite other religious & human rights peacemaking groups to join the effort or to offer co-sponsorship, including financial support.

Step Four

Begin contacts with Congressional Representatives and Senators with your personal invitation to underwrite - either entirely or in part - and personally accompany them or their Foreign Policy Aide on a fact-finding tour to Israel/Palestine. These contacts should be done by as many constituents as possible and by as many methods as possible. Make initial contact by letter explaining the CAP tour purpose and extending your invitation. Follow this with phone calls and personal visits. The Congress member needs to hear from a number of constituents that this is an important concern to many people in his/her district or state.

Step Five:

Determine the name of your Congressperson’s Foreign Policy Aide and begin direct contact with the Aide, offering information about CAP and an invitation to join you. Offer a written description of the CAP tour, its sponsorship and the sample itinerary.

Step Six:

Recruit Accompaniers who will travel on the tour with the Congressional Aides. These persons will normally pay their own way, though financial aid might be offered by sponsoring groups to those who need it. All “accompaniers” must be committed to the CAP purpose and goals. This is not a normal Holy Land tour or pilgrimage.

Step Seven:

Establish a budget that will include cost of air travel, ground tour, financial aid and administration expenses. (A 10-day tour should cost about \$2,600 each depending on fluctuating air travel costs.)

Step Eight:

Begin fund raising from sponsoring judicatories, congregations, peace and human rights organizations and individuals. The Presbytery of East Iowa** can serve as the CAP treasurer,. Make clear that this is a nonpartisan effort to inform and educate congress members so that they can make intelligent decisions about Middle East policy and aid based on the moral principles of peace, justice, freedom and security for all persons in Israel/Palestine and for all Americans.

Resources:

* 2007 CAP tour coordinators:

Rev. Darrell & Sue Yeane, <mailto:sue-dy@avalon.net>

** 2007 CAP Tour: March 31 – April 10
Presbytery of East Iowa
1700 S. First Avenue, Suite 23
Iowa City IA 52245

Persons to contact with previous experience with CAP:

Rev. Lisa Ross-Thedens, Presbyterian, jthedens@trxinc.com

Rev. Greg Geier, ELCA Lutheran, ggeier@netins.net

Pat Minor-Nidey, Quaker, pat-minor-nidey@uiowa.edu

Germana Nijim, Roman Catholic, gnijim@cfu.net

Laila Aosse, Muslim, lailaaosse@juno.com

Craig Cohen, Jewish, CCohen@csis.org

Naomi Zeff. Congressional Aide, <naomi.zeff@mail.house.gov>

Hedy Epstein, Jewish, hedy@hedyepstein.com

Mary Jo Maass, Lutheran, bibi@machlink.com

Julia Lenel, Secular, jlenel@mchsi.com

Robin Kash, Presbyterian, rekle@sbcglobal.net

David Viken. Lutheran, yiken1@mchsi.com

Congressional Accompaniment Project, Sample Itinerary
(based on 2006 schedule)

Staying at Notre Dame Hotel & Conference Ct. Jerusalem



July 30, Sunday - Jerusalem

4:15 pm Arrival and Travel to Jerusalem

6:00 pm Orientation and Review of Schedule

7:00 pm Dinner

July 31, Monday – Bethlehem, Beit Jala, Beit Sahour

9:00 am The Situation of Christians in Bethlehem Today

Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb, Director, International Christian Center of Bethlehem

10:30 am Overview of the Refugee Issue

Mohammed Jaradat at Badil – Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights

11:30 pm Tour and lunch at the Dheishe Refugee Camp

2:00 pm The Wall and its Impact on the Bethlehem Community

George Rishmawi, Siraj, Center for Holy Land Studies

4:00 pm An Analysis of the Wall

Prof. Jad Issac, Director, Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem (ARIJ)

5:30 Overview on Rights to Education

Ghassan Andoni, Public Relations Office, Bir Zeit University

7:00 pm Dinner in Jerusalem

8:00 pm Debriefing

August 1, Tuesday - Jerusalem

8:30 am The Politics of the Old City

Old City Tour : Christian, Muslim & Jewish Quarters

11:00 am Analysis from the Israeli Perspective

Rabbi David Rosen, American Jewish Committee, Jerusalem

1:00 pm An Analysis of the Status of Jerusalem

Lunch with Dr. Menachem Klein, Professor Bar Ilan University, Tel Aviv

3:00 pm The Palestinian Christian Perspective

Cedar Duaybis and Samia Khoury, Sabeel Board of Directors

5:30 pm The Role of the Israeli Religious Left

Rabbi Arik Ascherman, Director, Rabbis for Human Rights

7:00 pm Dinner

8:00 pm Debriefing

August 2, Wednesday – Around Jerusalem

10:00 am Overview of the Humanitarian Crisis

Allegra Pacheco, U.N. Office Coordinating Humanitarian Affairs

1:00 pm Lunch with students and visit to Al Quds University, Abu Dis

2:30 p.m. Issues of Jerusalem for the Muslim Community

Dr. Sari Nusseibeh, President, Al Quds University

4:30 am Human Rights and Israel

Jessica Montell, Director, B'tselem. Israeli Human Rights

6:00 pm Dinner

7:00 Personal Cost of the Conflict

Robi Damlin & Nadwa Sarandah, Family Forum (formerly Bereaved Parents Circle).

8:00 pm Debriefing

August 3, Thursday - Meetings in Hebron

9:30 am Meeting with the Mayor of Beit Omaar, Farhan M. Alqam, member of PNC

11:00 am Walking tour of Hebron Old City including visit to Ibrahimi Mosque/ Cave of Machpelah Rich Meyers, CPT

12:30 pm Lunch

2:00 pm Meet with Christian Peacemaker Team (CPT)

3:30 pm Problems of Rural Palestinians; Road blocks, By-pass Roads, Settler Harassment

Trip to At-Tawaney Village, southern Hebron Hills

6:00 pm Examine Problem of Home Demolitions

Dinner at Atta and Rodeina Jabber home, Hebron Hills

8:30 pm Debriefing

August 4, Friday – Jerusalem

8:30 am Presentation of film & discussion of Bedouin in Jerusalem

Rabbi Jeremy Milgrom founder, Rabbis for Human Rights and Yesh G'vul

11:30 pm The Grassroots Israeli Response

Meeting with Gila Svirsky, Coalition of Women for Peace

1:00 pm Stand with Women in Black, Jerusalem Chapter, in Zion Square

2:00 p.m. The Jerusalem Problem: Lecture and Tour

Jeff Halper, director, Israeli Coalition Against House Demolitions

5:00 Discussion on the Question of Morally Responsible Investment

Naim Ateek, Director of Sabeel

7:00 pm Dinner at Sabeel

8:00 pm Debriefing

August 5, Saturday –Ramallah Visit

9:00 am Travel to Ramallah

10:00 am An Analysis of the Systems of Occupation

Professsor Khalil Shakaki, Chief, Palestinian Survey

11:30 am Overview on Rights to Education

Students and faculty at Bir Zeit University

2:30 pm The Role of Islam in Palestine

Sheik Tayseer Rajab Al-Tamimi, Head, Islamic Court of Justice

4:30 pm Analysis from the PA perspective

Greg Khalil & Maen Areikat, Palestinian Negotiation Affairs Dept.

7:00 pm Dinner at Philadelphia Restaurant

August 6, Sunday – Jerusalem

Open morning: Options: worship service on your own

9:00 am Worship at Church of the Redeemer

11:00 am Worship at St. George's Cathedral

1:00 pm Meeting with Israeli Office of Foreign Affairs

Nimrod Barkan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Inter-religious Affairs

3:00 pm Visit to Efrat Settlement in West Bank and Efrat Historic Show & Tour

4:00 pm Settler's Perspective

Bruce Brill from Takoa Religious Settlement in West Bank

6:00 pm Perspective from a IDF soldier

Representative, IDF Reserve Unit, "Breaking The Silence"

8:30 pm Debriefing

August 7, Monday - Jerusalem

9:00 am Visit to Abu Dis and the Impact of the wall in the Jerusalem Area

Terry Bulata, "Stop the Wall." organization

11:00 am US Consul General Office

Chris Stevens, Consular for Political Affairs or Micaela Schweitzer-Bluhm, Consul for Cultural Affairs

12:30 pm Free afternoon

6:30 pm Closing Dinner at Ambassador Hotel , Jerusalem

August 8, Tuesday – Departure for the USA