

Importing Hope: Olive Oil Partnerships

Making a difference one bottle at a time



“From the moment I arrived, I saw how important the olive harvest is for Palestinians’ well-being,” says Peter Mann, one of the hundred Presbyterians who attended the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program’s 2006 travel/study event in Israel and Palestine. “The tree represents peace and life; the oil is a symbol of purity and light. Centuries of cultivating trees on hillside terraces helped Palestinian farmers produce one of the most distinctive oils in the world.”

Peter also saw the grave economic realities in the occupied territories (where a quarter of the people cannot meet basic human consumption needs) and wanted to make a difference. And he did. Upon return to Minnesota, he launched Import Peace, which sells fair trade, organic Palestinian olive oil and contributes all profits to charity.

This is a story of one person making a difference. It is also an example of the commitment the Presbyterian Church (USA) made at its 216th General Assembly to “development and compassionate action in Palestine.” One of the avenues for this effort is to help expand international markets for Palestinian olive oil, embroidery, carved olive wood, and other products. Better sales benefit farmers, artisans, and their communities.

You can make a difference, too. Consider buying olive oil for yourself or promoting it in your presbytery. Perhaps you’d like to host a fund-raising olive oil tasting party, or maybe you can help plant new olive trees in the West Bank. There are many ways to help, and many good programs to work with; a few of them are listed below.

“**Keep Hope Alive**” is a project of the East Jerusalem YMCA to plant 50,000 olive trees. Since 2000, nearly half a million olive trees have been uprooted in Palestine for the expansion of Israeli settlements, bypass roads, and the separation barrier. A donation of twenty dollars covers all the costs to plant and grow a young tree. For more information, see www.ywca-palestine.org or email olivetree@ywca-palestine.org.

Import Peace is a direct source of premium, hand-pressed, organic, extra virgin olive oil from the most recent olive harvest in the West Bank. Cases containing 12 bottles (each 25.4 ounces or 750 mL) are \$180 + \$25 for shipping and handling by Fed Ex Ground. Every order is protected by a 100% money-back guarantee against breakage, and all profits are donated to charity. For more information, see www.importpeace.org or call 218 963-0942.

Sindyanna of Galilee is run by Arab and Jewish women, working to improve the economic situation of Palestinians in Israel and in the occupied territories. Their primary focus is on marketing olive oil, but other locally made food products and handicrafts are also available. For more information, see www.sindyanna.com.

Oil from both Import Peace and Sindyanna is certified fair trade, which ensures a fair price is paid to provide for the producer’s living and family needs, safe working conditions, care for the environment, and equal opportunity for women, without child exploitation.