

## The Methodist Church in Britain

### Palestine and Israel

#### Activities and events from July 2014 to June 2015

This report seeks to provide an insight into some of the activities of Methodists since the receipt by Methodist Conference of the Methodist Council briefing on the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions in July 2014.

Over the period of this report Gaza has seen a further devastating conflict. On 8 July 2014 Israel launched a military operation in the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip. Seven weeks of Israeli bombardment, Palestinian rocket attacks and fighting between IDF and Hamas forces resulted in the deaths of over 2,200 people, including 490 children, with a further 10,000 people wounded. 64 Israeli soldiers and 6 civilians were killed through action by Gaza militias.

#### The Methodist Council briefing on the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement

*2014 Methodist Conference resolution 23/1 "The Conference commended the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Briefing to the Methodist people for study, reflection and prayer either as individuals or with others"*

Some districts and circuits have highlighted the Methodist Council briefing within their synod or circuit meetings and in their communications. The breadth of circuit and district action has not been determined but it is noted that a small number of meetings have been arranged to specifically focus on the issues surrounding the call of the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement.

#### Methodist International Liaison Office in Jerusalem

*2014 Methodist Conference resolution 23/7 "The Conference ... recommended that the Methodist people take pro-active action in the region by engaging in projects and programmes that improve livelihoods and encourage greater interaction between divided communities through promoting justice and peace."*

The [Methodist Liaison Office in Jerusalem](#)<sup>i</sup> exists to increase the awareness and involvement of the Methodist community in the issues of Palestine and Israel. It is a partnership of the World Methodist Council, the Methodist Church of Britain and the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church (UMC).

Over the past year the office has facilitated an increased number of visits and pilgrimages of Methodists to the region. The management of the office has been taken on by Rev Kristen Brown of the UMC in the United States. Kristen is attending the 2015 Methodist Conference in Southport and partaking in the World Church Pre-Conference Consultation. The World Church Relationships office of the Methodist Church in Britain has developed a volunteer programme to enable short term volunteers to support the office in Jerusalem and to be changed through their encounter with Palestinian Christians and others in the region.

The Partnership Coordinator for Asia & Pacific, World Church Relationships office, continues to liaise with the UMC General Board of Global Ministries on advocacy initiatives and in August 2014 supported a Conference in Ohio titled [Walking with Palestinian Christians for Holy Justice and Peace](#).<sup>ii</sup>

### **Strengthening relationships with church and other faith partners**

*2014 Methodist Conference resolution 23/6 “The Conference wished to continue in dialogue with those in Britain who are closely affected by the ongoing conflict and called on Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) to act as an agent for the Churches ....”*

Over the past year members of the Connexional Team and Methodists beyond the Connexional Team have continued to deepen dialogue with a number of key faith partners. Some of these initiatives have been supported by CTBI.

CTBI continues to support the liaison of the Methodist Church in Britain with the Middle East Council of Churches and undertook a visit to the region for this purpose.

### **Live with Dignity, Kairos Palestine 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary – 2 to 4 December, 2014**

250 participants gathered in Bethlehem, marking the 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the publication of the Kairos Palestine statement “A moment of truth”. Rachael Varney, World Church Relationships office and Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) attended and [reported on this event](#)<sup>iii</sup> and on her impressions of the situation in Palestine and Israel.

### **Prayer and study resources**

The World Week of Prayer for Palestine and Israel is coordinated globally by the World Council of Churches and supported in the UK by a range of church denominations. In September 2014, several Methodist churches took an active part in the World Week of Prayer. A list of ecumenical events that were held as a part of this week can be seen on the website of Pax Christi UK. The 2015 World Week of Prayer will take place from 20 to 26 September and the online resources to support this have been publicised through the [Methodist Church website](#)<sup>iv</sup>, the JPIT ‘Praxis’ e-newsletter and social media.

CTBI produced a set of five studies for Lent in 2015 under the theme [Walking and praying with Christians of the Middle East](#).<sup>v</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> [www.facebook.com/MethodistLiaisonOfficeInJerusalem](http://www.facebook.com/MethodistLiaisonOfficeInJerusalem)

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.umcmission.org/learn-about-us/news-and-stories/2014/august/0807palestinianchristians#sthash.PsflPav1.dpuf>

<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.methodist.org.uk/media/1439675/wcr-visit-rachael-israel&palestine-dec2014.pdf>

<sup>iv</sup> [www.methodist.org.uk/mission/public-issues/peacemaking/israel-palestine](http://www.methodist.org.uk/mission/public-issues/peacemaking/israel-palestine)

<sup>v</sup> [www.ctbi.org.uk/lent-study-2015-walking-and-praying-with-christians-of-the-middle-east/](http://www.ctbi.org.uk/lent-study-2015-walking-and-praying-with-christians-of-the-middle-east/)