

## Plan an Event

From United Methodists' Holy Land Task Force:

[https://www.umhltf.org/Plan\\_An\\_Event.html](https://www.umhltf.org/Plan_An_Event.html)

If you are interested in organizing an event about Israel/Palestine, we have provided some ideas and resources to help you do that.

For a simple gathering at your church, you might want to show a video or invite a speaker. See a [variety of dvds](#) that can be ordered online. Check our [speakers bureau](#) to see if there is a local speaker you could invite to be the keynote of your event.

Whatever kind of event you are having, we recommend offering those who attend a way to follow up on what they have learned: see our Action & Advocacy section for ideas and resources for your participants to get involved in justice- and peacemaking for Israel/Palestine, as individuals and/or as a group. Giving them the PalestinePortal.org web address would be an excellent way to allow them to follow up on what they have heard at your event.

### Plan Your Holy Land Event

**Adapted from a resource by United Methodists' Holy Land Task Force ([www.umhltf.org](http://www.umhltf.org))**

This guide can help you to think through the details of holding an event. For simple church events, some of these elements will be obvious or will not apply. But think outside the box, even if you have done events before at your church. Something new and a bit unexpected can be the key to a successful event.

*Don't let the length of these planning ideas discourage you. We have tried to supply information for many types of events. We recommend that you keep the event as simple as you need it to be and just use the information that is helpful to you.*

### Name of event

It can be just a simple description, and shorter is better "Justice and Peace in the Middle East." "It's Time for Peace in the Holy Land!" "Mid East Peace - What can we do?"

If you can think of something catchier, so much the better.

### Purpose(s)

Education? Fellowship? Advocacy? Building Membership?

Your event can have more than one purpose, but it is best to be clear from the start what those are, to make the best choices of how to spend your budget, allocate your time before and during the event, and to make sure you stay focused on what you really want to accomplish.

*Even educational events should provide some follow up action for participants to take. Schedule another gathering? Start discussing the issues or future events/action by email? Write a letter or email to government officials or to newspapers? Donate money? What else would work for your participants? Perhaps you can let them discuss and suggest what they are interested in doing.*

People often intend to write letters, but never get around to it at home. You could set some time at the event for people to write a letter or postcard for elected officials, and provide them with materials as well as sample text. Then you can put them in the mail yourself.

### **Who**

Who are you hoping will attend this event? One particular committee? Your congregation? People in the surrounding community? Beyond your church, people in the district or the conference?

### **When**

Date and time, duration/ending time

Depending on whom you are inviting, when would the most people be available? Think about when clergy and laity have the time to come, if you want both. If they have children, when would that prevent them from attending? Are they working people, retirees, students?

### **Where**

Building and room

What size space is needed - how many people are expected/hoped for?

Is the location accessible to all you are hoping will come?

Is parking available and adequate? What other transportation is available?

### **Childcare**

Do you need to provide childcare? Where will that be and who will handle it? Are they qualified? You should always have more than one person with children, for safety of the children and for protection from liability of the adults and the institution involved.

### **Attendance Fee**

Will you charge for attendance? If so, is it to cover costs, or to raise additional funds? What can your intended participants afford? How strong is their interest and what, if anything, would they be willing to pay for this event? Can you offer a discount to "members?"

### **Staff**

Event Coordinator - 'the buck stops' with this person

Assistants - to help in each major element of the event: Publicity, program, making/planning materials, registration, equipment, décor for event, food prep, etc.

Helpers - willing hands on the day of the event or earlier, to carry out task such as setup, cleaning up, making décor, collating/folding/stapling, driving to do errands, etc.

### **Funding and Budget**

Where is your funding coming from? Can your church help? Can individuals who care about these issues provide a donation? If they make the donation that is payable to your church, and that money is designated for your event, it could be a tax-deductible donation. Talk to your pastor about arranging that. Are there other sources who might help to fund such an event?

Possible items to consider in planning your budget:

publicity, food, printed materials, video or music, speaker or performer fees, room fees, childcare, equipment....others?

### **Refreshments**

Will you offer some refreshments? Even the simplest events often go better when a little refreshment is offered, even if it is just coffee/tea and condiments for those, along with some cold water. It is a typical of Middle Eastern custom to offer hospitality to all guests, so it's particularly appropriate for discussing Israel/Palestine. A plate of cookies, some fruit or other finger food would be a nice addition.

Supply List for simple refreshments: cups, napkins, stirrers, hot water or coffee urn, instant coffee or brewed, tea bags, sugar, other sweetener, creamer, perhaps water or another cold beverage? Serving plates for snacks, the snack itself.

### **Advance Planning**

#### Publicity:

How far ahead do you want the news to go out to give people time to plan to attend? At least 2 weeks or more is advisable. If you can start a month ahead, follow that up with repeated announcements closer to the date, to remind them, and to reach some who didn't read the first one. The more repeats, the better! It sends the message this is really an important event, not to be ignored.

Find out the deadlines for publications you want to be in: church or other newsletters, Sunday bulletins, email news from your regional body (conference, synod, etc). These deadlines will come up sooner than you expected, and many opportunities for publicizing an event are lost that way.

#### Materials/supplies/equipment for the event:

How much time do you need to prepare printed materials and print them?

To prepare the meal or refreshments?

To setup and decorate the room?

To find other needed elements, such as equipment? Will they be borrowed? Rented?

Do you need to order a dvd or things that will come by mail? Allow time for mailing.

Do you need time to shop for those things or for food or décor? How much time for shopping?

Can you locate in advance where you will need to go, by phone or on the internet?

### **Event Schedule**

Plan the entire schedule of the event - what will happen during this day or evening? Elements to consider, though not in any particular order here: registration, eating, fellowship time, discussion among the attendees, listening to a speaker, receiving materials, watching a video, listening to music, watching a performance, engaging in writing or creating something, signing up for something.

Set up - be generous! Allow yourself plenty of time for setup and make sure you will have help to get it done, especially if heavy things need to be moved.

Event - plan the schedule in detail, and be realistic about how long it takes for each part - registration, speakers or other program, discussion, etc.

Plan on a little "wiggle" room for some things that will get off schedule.

Take down and clean up - you should leave any facility as good as you found it, if not better. Make sure you will have help after the event for cleaning up.

### **Additional elements for the program**

Do you need to get equipment? If so, set it up and try it beforehand! Will the speaker need a microphone and audio system? Do you need a tv or other screen for a dvd? Who knows how to run the equipment you will use?

Are you playing a dvd? Where is it coming from?

Will you have music at any point (a nice touch when people are coming in, or any time they are talking casually). How will you play it? What music will you use?

Will you have a speaker? See the groups at our website, or contact us for help, if you cannot locate a speaker.

Will you have a performance? Music,, dance, drama? See some suggestions at our website for those also.

### **Handouts**

Consider the need not to waste paper when you are planning your printed materials. What are the essential pieces of information you want people to have? What will they need right there, and what do you hope they'll take home? Can you give short or abbreviated versions and give them a website (such as PalestinePortal.org) to download what they want?

How many copies do you need? Can you minimize the quantity and make more of them quickly if you run out? If not, are some of the documents ones that can be used again at a later date? Or can you recycle the paper afterward?

### **Registration**

Be sure to plan this in a way that will not allow long lines to build up and slow down the process. Perhaps several people sitting at registration tables, with several lines for attendees?

Gathering information: Even at the simplest events, it is a good idea to collect contact information, to build on what you accomplish that day. Have someone assigned to that task, and make sure they have supplies. A registration sheet is good, which indicates the information you want: name, email address(es), telephone number(s), mailing address?, and if applicable: which home church, which district, which organization, etc.

Printed materials and folders: If you are providing a significant amount of materials, can you also provide a folder to hold them in? If so, think about an adhesive label to on the front, that you can print from your computer. Avery and other companies make that easy to do. A label with the name of your event will help people to locate these materials in the future, and remind them about your event.

Nametags - if there is any chance not everyone will know each other, nametags are an excellent idea that is often overlooked. It lends a professional touch to the event, and really helps people in talking to others.

The type that are self-adhesive are the cheapest and most practical, with no issues of how and where to connect them. Have some felt markers handy to fill them in.

### **Publicity!!!**

Many people neglect this, just do the minimum publicity, and hope/assume people will come. A big mistake! If you do not have a good attendance, your efforts in planning a great event have been wasted. It takes effort to get that good attendance, but the effort brings results. Think of every way you can reach people, do all those, and then think again.

- Email - personal ones to individuals you know, and also to the congregation or other membership. Think of other lists you can send your announcement to, besides the obvious one(s). Even if just one or two more people come, that was worth it. But be sure those groups would allow such an announcement.
- Make phone calls. Nothing gets results like personal calls to everyone on your list - VERY effective in getting people to show up who otherwise would let this event pass them by.
- Design a nice looking, not too crowded announcement that has all the pertinent information and least one graphic element, like a powerful photo, logo(s), etc. That can be used in the form of flyers, announcements for publications, to go on websites, etc.
- Use social networking such as Facebook, Twitter, etc.
- Ask anyone who has a related website to put your announcement on it.
- Post and distribute flyers at your church, and send to others asking them to do the same at their churches.
- Announcements in newsletters, church bulletins, etc - plan ahead and know the deadlines for the publication you want to be in. Find out who gives permission for your announcement to be included.
- Try to get listed in local newspapers' event calendars, if you want to attract an audience beyond your congregation or group.
- Paper mailings for your flyer, perhaps with a letter of invitation.

### **Gifts and Sale Items**

Do you want to give the attendees something to remember this event or your group? Items that you might be able to make or to order online: booklets, pamphlets, bumper stickers, other size stickers, pens & pencils, pins and badges, bookmarks, and notecards.

You also could sell items that they would appreciate having. On Palestine Portal, you can find lists of [books and dvds](#) as well as [Palestinian products](#).

### **Décor**

Many people do not think any décor is needed, but a small effort in this area can make an event more welcoming, have a stronger impact, and leave a lasting impression in the attendees. Some décor to consider:

Posters and banners - you can hang posters on walls or doors using ribbon or string. Or use double sided tape or poster foam. You might just get some poster board and cover it with

photos from the Middle East - Palestinian refugees, Israelis and Palestinians at peace rallies, etc. Add a piece of paper in the center with a message to bring it together.

Table coverings - both for dining tables, AND for information or registration tables. Something neat and clean at the very least. If it has the look of being Middle Eastern cloth or is in a color scheme that fits the surroundings, all the better.

Centerpieces - for dining tables. Flowers always work, but if you want to go the extra mile, something that pertains to the event can be a real eye-catcher.

Candles - these always add a great ambience to any space, indoors or out. You can just have a couple lighted on a registration table, or a few tea lights scattered on a dining table. Be sure to put a coaster or at least a small piece of paper under any candle - they often run over, even tealights in metal holders. (See below an easy candle decoration that adds a message to your décor.)

Other items for information and registration tables - photos in frames of people from the region; any products from Palestine: olive wood carvings, embroidered items, olive oil, etc.