

# 2017 Advent Peace Box Resources



Worship and study materials for your congregation's Advent journey



The United Church of Canada/L'Église Unie du Canada

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## Welcome to the Advent Peace Box Journey!

### Why an Advent Peace Box?

In this season of waiting for the Christ child, we turn our hearts toward the Advent themes of hope, peace, joy, and love. What do these themes mean in our context and for our friends in Israel and Palestine? The teachings of Christ call us to love our neighbours, to seek healing and justice for those who suffer. We remember that Christ too suffered and was born to a humble Jewish family under oppressive rule by the Romans. At this time of year, we turn our attention to the birthplace of Christ, Bethlehem. We think not only of this region thousands of years ago, but of the current context and the community living there. Our prayer, attention, and action make a difference!

### What is different this year?

June 5, 2017, marks 50 years since the end of the Six-Day War and the beginning of Israeli military occupation in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. To mark this date, our Christian brothers, sisters, and cousins in Palestine recently sent this message: “We stand facing the impossible, but we have not lost hope, since as followers of the Risen One, we are the people of hope. However, we need you and we need you now more than ever. We need your costly solidarity. We need brave women and men who are willing to stand in the forefront. This is no time for shallow diplomacy Christians. We urge you to hear our call...” (National Coalition of Christian Organizations in Palestine’s June 2017 [open letter to the World Council of Churches](#)). We hear their call and we boldly respond.

If you are a repeat user, see “I have used this all before” (pp. 27–28) for ideas on keeping it fresh. Do you miss a resource like the White Gift Drama that was previously included, or need help to extract the materials you need from the United Church website or the USB stick in your box? Please get in touch with us at [unsettling-goods@united-church.ca](mailto:unsettling-goods@united-church.ca).

### How do I use this kit?

In this resource, you will find worship and study materials to help you plan your congregation’s Advent journey: Advent theme times, sermon starters, stories, prayers, and suggestions for hymns and liturgical actions. Also included are outlines for workshops and a devotional for use in meetings.

1. Worship resources are provided for the four weeks of Advent. However, you may choose to use this resource on just one Sunday as part of an all ages/children’s time or to inspire sermon reflections. Please adapt it to suit your community and context. The worship and workshop resources can be used throughout the year along with other resources from the *Unsettling Goods campaign*.
2. You will need a Peace Box to accompany this resource. Each Peace Box contains the four symbols that will be used in the worship liturgies: oil, soap, spices, and a map. The Advent Peace Box is available for order at [http://zatoun.com/order\\_can.htm](http://zatoun.com/order_can.htm) (scroll down to the United Church option)
3. If you are going to use the Peace Box each week, the following is suggested:
  - a. Open the box each week as part of the Advent candle-lighting liturgy, or as part of the all ages/children’s time.
  - b. Share how each symbol relates to each Sunday’s theme of hope, peace, joy, or love (see Advent Theme Times, p. 5).
  - c. Read or tell the appropriate story either in the opening candle-lighting liturgy or in the all ages/children’s time. Story cards can be used as another visual tool.
  - d. Introduce or close this part of the liturgy with one of the suggested hymns, using the same one each time or choosing a hymn that is related to the particular item or theme.
  - e. Scripture notes on the New Revised Common Lectionary readings for Advent are provided as starting points for your reflections.

## About the Unsettling Goods Campaign

[www.united-church.ca/social-action/justice-initiatives/unsettling-goods-choose-peace-palestine-and-israel](http://www.united-church.ca/social-action/justice-initiatives/unsettling-goods-choose-peace-palestine-and-israel)

The 41st General Council in August 2012 called on United Church members to take concrete actions to support the end of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories. You and your congregation continue to be invited to “Pray, Choose, Speak for Peace in Palestine and Israel” by taking part in any of the following actions:

- Join in worship, prayer, and study. Plan a worship service based on partner calls for peace, study the KAIROS Palestine Document, invite a United Church member who has visited or lived in Palestine/Israel to be part of your worship service or speak in your congregation.  
[unsettling-goods@united-church.ca](mailto:unsettling-goods@united-church.ca)
- Engage in “courageous conversations” about just peace in Palestine and Israel. The “Let’s Keep Talking” resources are designed to help participants move beyond some of the myths, barriers, and questions that hold many back from fully engaging in the Unsettling Goods campaign. The videos are a great length for projection before worship or during coffee time.
- Take economic action. Join The United Church of Canada and the United Church of Christ in requesting PayPal to extend services to West Bank and Gaza Palestinians; and cease extending services to the illegal settlements.  
[www.united-church.ca/social-action/act-now/urge-paypal-extend-its-services-palestinians](http://www.united-church.ca/social-action/act-now/urge-paypal-extend-its-services-palestinians)
- Join The No Way to Treat a Child campaign, which seeks to challenge Israel’s prolonged military occupation of Palestinians by exposing widespread and systematic ill-treatment of Palestinian children in the Israeli military detention system. [www.nowaytotreatachild.ca](http://www.nowaytotreatachild.ca)
- Support trust-building programs between Palestinians and Israelis.  
[www.united-church.ca/social-action/justice-initiatives/trust-building-between-palestinians-and-israelis](http://www.united-church.ca/social-action/justice-initiatives/trust-building-between-palestinians-and-israelis)
- Become involved in conversations with Jewish and Palestinian Canadians.
- United Church partners invite all to Come & See biblical sites, while witnessing the reality of military occupation, and what individuals can do to contribute to a just peace with reconciliation.  
[www.united-church.ca/social-action/justice-initiatives/travelling-holy-land](http://www.united-church.ca/social-action/justice-initiatives/travelling-holy-land)
- The Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) creates an international presence to contribute toward the realization of a just peace in Palestine and Israel. You can be part of that presence. Read more and apply at  
[www.united-church.ca/opportunities/ecumenical-accompanier-israel-palestine](http://www.united-church.ca/opportunities/ecumenical-accompanier-israel-palestine).
- Support Palestinian livelihoods by purchasing fair trade products.

## About Zatoun Products

The United Church of Canada is working with Zatoun to bring you the Advent Peace Box. Zatoun is an organization that sells fair trade products from Palestine to support the farmers of Palestine in the struggle for their livelihood and land. Funds from the sale of Zatoun products also help support an arts and education program for young people in Palestine and make it possible to plant olive trees inside Palestine, where many have been destroyed during the occupation. Purchasing products that support Palestinian livelihoods is one element of the Unsettling Goods campaign. For more information, see <http://zatoun.com>.

## Advent Theme Times

### Opening the Box

*(Use this introduction once if you are using all four items in one service, or at the beginning of each service if you are spreading it over four weeks.)*

We just received this box in the mail. I wonder what's inside? Does anyone recognize it? It's called the Peace Box. Hmm... I wonder if this box is an early gift in this season of waiting? I wonder.

I wonder if it's possible to find peace inside this box? Let's start to open this box.

Did you know that a lot of people have tried to open this box without asking questions or listening first? Some don't want to open this box at all. And some people think they know what's in the box before they look. What do you think is in the box? Can we tell from the outside?

Let's look inside...gently...

*(Touch or lift up each item and name it.)* Hmm... these things have come a long way to be with us. I wonder what they have to do with peace? Look at these pages. They have stories written on them. I wonder if by listening to these stories, we might discover how to find the path to peace? *(Pull out the item you will speak about at this time and make the theme connection.)*

### Theme connection: Olive oil—Hope—Anointing

*(Bring out the bottle of olive oil.)* I wonder what this olive oil has to do with our Advent theme of **hope**? You can cook with this oil and eat it with different foods. It is used for fuel by putting it into lamps and burning it with a wick just like a candle. Oil is used for massage and to sooth and heal skin. You can make soap with olive oil. You can even use oil to anoint people? There are so many ways to use this oil!

Olive trees must be very special if their olives and oil can do so many good things. Do you know where olive trees grow (Italy, Palestine, Israel...)? Let's use this oil to anoint one another to remember the hope of God's promises and that we have all been anointed as God's beloved children.

### Theme connection: Soap—Peace—Cleansing

*(Bring out the soap.)* I wonder what soap has to do with our Advent theme of **peace**? Soap and water wash away the dirt and messiness of daily life.

When I feel hot and tired and dirty, a warm, soapy bath can feel so good. When I am mad or sad, a splash of cool water on my face or neck can calm me down and help me feel more peaceful inside. Our baptism in water reminds us that we are blessed and loved by God and nothing can separate us from the peace of God's love.

### Theme connection: Za'atar spice—Joy—Nourishment

*(Bring out the spice.)* I wonder what spice has to do with our Advent theme of **joy**? The smell of spices stirs our appetites and makes our food taste so much better. Eating becomes more than filling our bellies. When something smells good, we can't wait to enjoy it. Some people use spices as incense—a way of offering prayers to God.

A sprinkling of God's love and grace delights us, so that when we try to live lives of justice and mercy, it is not just because we have to, but because it brings us joy!

**Theme connection: Map—Love—Action**

*(Bring out the map.)* So far, we have received olive oil, soap and za'atar spice. It feels like we are preparing for a feast—we can wash our hands and put all these ingredients together. I wonder what the last object in the box is? A map of Israel Palestine today. I wonder what this map has to do with our Advent theme of **love**?

Look at the top of this map. This is where Mary and Joseph lived. Then they travelled all the way down to this area to Bethlehem to be counted during the census. That is 160 kilometres away (like walking from Edmonton to Red Deer or Toronto to Stratford or...).

We rejoice and prepare like Mary for the arrival of Jesus. Like other people at that time, Mary and Joseph lived in a land controlled by another people, the Romans. This map shows us how the land of the Palestinians has been made smaller and smaller over the years by military force.

I wonder if Mary and Joseph had to make their journey today, how they would get from Nazareth to Bethlehem because of the walls that Israel has built. When we love and care about someone, we do everything we can to make sure that they are really free, because peace can't come without freedom. Love calls us to take action so that all people in Palestine and Israel can be free and live in peace.

*(Options: Read related story now or later; proceed with symbolic action after story or after sermon.)*

## Stories for All Ages/Children's Time

### Hope: To Exist Is to Resist

*This is a story about a farmer who finds hope in creatively farming and sharing. Let's read it.*

My name is Fayez Taneeb. I live near Tulkarm in the West Bank part of Palestine. My wife, Mona, and I operate the Hakoritana Farm with our son Oday. My family has operated the farm for three generations, starting with my grandfather in the 1920s.

When I graduated from high school, I did not want to be a farmer. I wanted to go outside Palestine to continue my studies. But Israeli officials have the power to decide who can enter or leave Palestine. They would not let me leave.

Then my father died. No one was growing crops on our farm anymore, so I decided to farm. But soldiers from Israel were using the property as a sports field. It took six months and many requests for the soldiers to be ordered to stop. I then began farming the land.

Mona and I were married in 1986. A year later was the start of what is known as the First Intifada. Palestinians rose up against Israel occupying, or being in control of, the West Bank and Gaza. During this uprising, Israeli soldiers put me in prison. I was not charged with doing anything illegal and never had a trial, but I was in prison for two years. Mona had to operate our farm on her own.

Since I was released, we have had many problems. Our farm is in a part of the West Bank where Israeli authorities have full control. They decide who gets water and electricity and who can construct buildings. They can make it illegal to go to a property. The authorities would not let us pipe water to our land, and they cut our pipes. In the past they have even blocked the roads we take to get here. Three times – in 2000, 2001, and 2003 – the Israeli authorities bulldozed the farm, destroying many greenhouses. They said it was in an area where only the military is allowed to go. When Israeli officials constructed the separation wall by our property, we lost almost two-thirds of our land. The land was taken to build the wall or is on the other side of the wall.

Another problem we face is chemical wastes from nearby factories. One factory manufactures fertilizers and pesticides. It used to be in a community in Israel, but people there were opposed to it. The Israeli court ordered the factory closed for pollution violations. The factory owners moved it next to our farm. Now at least 10 other factories near us discharge harmful wastes as liquids and into the air. The waste water makes it impossible for us to farm on part of our property.

Despite these challenges, we have found ways to grow healthy crops for our community. We have 12 greenhouses and bring in boxes of bees to help with pollination. We collect rainwater during the rainy season in a large tank. But we must also have water delivered by tanker truck, which is expensive. I created a drier for fruits and vegetables that uses fans from discarded computers and solar power.

We like to invite people to visit our farm. We explain what we are doing to grow healthy food and encourage farmers to grow food organically. If you know someone travelling to Palestine, invite them to visit our farm.

As told to George Bartlett  
(World Council of Churches Ecumenical Accompanier, spring 2017)

## Peace: Learning about Where We Live

*This is a story about a young woman who learned something about her home. Let's read it.*

My name is Niva. I'm a Jewish person born in the south of Israel. I grew up in a small community that was surrounded by desert. As a child, I didn't get to know my neighbours very well. We didn't speak the same language, and we didn't go to the same places. I was told that the people who lived on this land before us—the Bedouin people of Palestine—just left.

One day, my father took part in a protest. Our army had hurt and killed a lot of people in the country next to us, Lebanon. Some people from our own country attacked the group my father was with. He was killed. The people who attacked him were angry. They didn't think that we should speak for peace and justice, or question our leaders. Losing my father when I was very young changed how I see the world.

When I finished school, I had to join the Israeli army. It is the rule. I wished I didn't have to join. When I finished my service after two years, I thought about leaving Israel. Life here isn't easy. We live in fear and there is a lot of fighting. One day, I was walking along the seashore with my friend, Amaya. She told me about what happened 60 years ago when our country, Israel, was formed.

She said that there were other people living here, Palestinian people. Many of them were forced to leave their homes and their towns, because our people wanted to live here instead. I was shocked by what she told me. This isn't something we learn a lot about in school. I started to feel scared and sad. I had so many questions.

This is where I live. How come I didn't know about this before? If my country is the reason Palestinian people had to leave their homes, what can we do about it? I wondered if I should leave Israel. Maybe life would be better somewhere else with no war and no fighting. But I was born here. I love the people, the food, the language, and the land. I decided I didn't want to leave. I wanted to do something about what Amaya told me. I knew it would be hard, but I wanted to learn more and work for change.

I started to work for a group called Zochrot. (The word means "remembering" in the Hebrew language, in the feminine form.) I volunteered to create a tour of four Palestinian villages that used to exist in the south of Israel. I didn't know much about these places growing up, so I used the knowledge that Zochrot had about them. Today parts of these villages are covered with trees, but you can still find old buildings, like schools and houses where people lived. We at Zochrot lead tours to teach Israeli Jewish people about what happened here. People were forced to leave their homes so that we could live here. It is not easy to do this work. There are people in my country who don't want us to talk about these things.

My hope is that one day we will live together in this land, Palestinians and Israeli Jews as equals. Then the Palestinian people could return to their homes. There is a lot of fear, hatred, and fighting between people. But we need to learn how to live together. I believe most people want happiness, health, and a good life. They want to live in peace with no wars. I don't want other people to suffer because of what I do, or what my people did and still do today. Things are difficult, but I believe they can change.

*The first thing for us to do to be ready for peace is to wash ourselves clean of fear, anger, judgment, and shame. Are we ready to wash that away? Let us come forward to begin washing away the things that hold us back from peace. We have the healing soap from oil of the olive, the tree of peace, to clean us.*

Thank you to Niva Grunzweig from Zochrot (<http://zochrot.org>) for sharing her story.

## Joy: Music Transforms

*This is a story about young people. They use music to bring joy. Let's read it.*

At Christmas we sing carols in church. We hear Christmas songs on the street. Or singers might come to our door. Music reminds us that this is a special time of year. Music brings us joy.

There was a boy named Ramzi. Music changed his life. Ramzi Aburedwan was born in Bethlehem. He lived with his grandparents in a refugee camp. A refugee is someone who has been forced to leave their home.

Ramzi's family dreamed that one day they could return to their home. It isn't easy to grow up in a refugee camp. Palestinian people want their freedom. But the Israeli government controls what they can do and where they can go. And Ramzi wanted to be free.

When Ramzi was 17 years old, he learned about a new kind of music. Music teachers came to the refugee camp. They taught the children to play instruments. Ramzi learned the viola. (That's like a big violin.)

He loved the sound of the viola. He loved it even more when all the instruments played together. Ramzi got better and better at playing music. As he grew older, Ramzi's dream was to teach music to children in Palestine. And his dream came true. He started a school where many refugee children learn music.

One day, Ramzi and a group of young musicians got onto a bus. They went to a checkpoint. Palestinians have to pass through these places to get from one city to another. They need permission to travel to get to work, school, or a hospital, or to visit family. They need a special paper. And Israeli soldiers check their bags.

People have to line up inside cages. It is crowded. People often get tired and angry. They have to wait a long time. And sometimes the soldiers don't let people through.

The musicians came with their instruments. They knew that music can bring joy to a joyless place. Ramzi told them to keep playing, even if the soldiers told them to leave. The young people were very brave. They started to play music for everyone at the checkpoint.

The soldiers didn't know what to do. The people who were waiting in line stayed to listen to the music. Ramzi and the young musicians brought a gift of joy. They showed the world that even in a difficult situation, they can share a message of freedom, life, and peace.

*I wonder how we can share joy with those around us? Where can we bring the gift of joy? I wonder if joy is just like the spices we smell in the air today? We can't touch it or see it, but it's something good that we can sense all around us. We can celebrate by being together, by singing and sharing food. Can some of you help me bring spices around for everyone to share?*

The blog of former World Council of Church's Ecumenical Accompanier and United Church member Patricia Mercer includes pictures of what a checkpoint is like.

Visit: <https://patriciainpalestine.wordpress.com>

## Love: The Children of Susiya

*This is a story about a village in Palestine. Children play and make friends there. But they live in a hard situation. The churches in Jerusalem invite people from around the world to come and see what is happening. Patricia, who wrote this story, is one of those people. For three months she lived with Palestinians and Israelis who are working for peace. Let's read her story.*

Susiya is a small village in Palestine. The Palestinian people don't have control of their own country. This situation is called a "military occupation." In this small village, the Israeli army told the people to leave. They were going to tear down their homes and use their land for themselves.

But the people don't want to leave. They love their homes. They love their families and their animals. They love the land and their community. This place is their home. Where else would they go?

During this difficult situation, the children try to go about their daily lives. They are just like children anywhere. The other observers and I arrive just as school finishes for the summer. Remember how that feels?

Getting up and out first thing in the morning. Meeting up with friends. Going in and out of each other's homes? The children play school, marbles, and games. They play little sally saucer and statue. They fill water balloons and—watch out!

We watch the children play. We watch them push and pull, cry and laugh. There is a lot of love in this close community.

A special moment for me is playing rock-a-bye baby. All of the children want a turn being rocked. Even the older ones, who have trouble fitting on my lap! Then I teach them to dance to "Rock Around the Clock." And they teach me to dance to an Arabic song!

Every child needs a safe place to live and grow up. The children of Susiya and many other villages in Palestine need to have courage. As long as this conflict goes on, they will live with the very real fear of losing their homes.

*We hear the love and courage of the people in Susiya who want to keep their village. This map tells a story of children who live with the fear of losing their homes. Are we ready to love? Are we ready to step up and help the people of Palestine and Israel? I wonder what love is calling forth from us?*

For pictures of the children of Susiya that accompany this story from the blog of United Church member and former World Council of Churches Ecumenical Accompanier and Patricia Mercer visit: <https://patriciainpalestine.wordpress.com>

## Hymn Choices (Liturgical Year B)

*These hymns can be used as responses or sung in full during the service.*

### Use Each Sunday

- MV 169 When Hands Reach Out Beyond Divides
- MV 179 Sisters Let Us Walk Together
- MV 221 I Am Walking a Path of Peace
- VU 10 Prepare the Way of the Lord
- VU 15 Came He Not in Fire
- VU 16 Mary, Woman of the Promise

### Advent One—Hope

- MV 157 I Am a Child of God (*sing all or one verse each week*)
- VU 4 God of All Places
- VU 28 Herald! Sound the Note of Gladness
- VU 30 Hail to God's Own Anointed

### Advent Two—Peace

- MV 138 My Love Colours Outside the Lines
- VU 17 O Ancient Love
- VU 18 There's a Voice in the Wilderness
- VU 27 Tomorrow Christ Is Coming

### Advent Three—Joy

- MV 76 If I Have Been the Source of Pain
- MV 95 How Deep the Peace
- MV 149 Peace for the Children (*add: Peace for Palestine; for Israel; for Middle East*)
- MV 173 Put Peace into Each Other's Hands

*Added verses for MV 173:*

Put peace into each other's hands, a fragile gift of redemption  
Let justice reign and mercy rule to bring an end to oppression

Be not afraid to learn the truth about the long occupation  
To understand will give you heart to seek and find resolution

Put peace into each other's hands and like a dove release it  
Renew the love that lives within, let blessing find expression

### Advent Four—Love

- MV 134 There Was a Child in Galilee
- MV 159 In Star and Crescent
- MV 165 There Is a Time
- MV 169 When Hands Reach Out Beyond Divides
- VU 28 Herald! Sound the Note of Gladness
- VU 30 Hail to God's Own Anointed

## Liturgical Actions, Prayers, Sermon Ideas

**ADVENT 1     December 3, 2017     Hope Is a Choice     Symbol—Oil**

**Scripture Image:** The Tree

**Liturgical Action:**

*(This action might follow the story, perhaps during an intergenerational time, or take place in the response time in worship following a sermon.)*

After opening the box, during an all ages/children's time, invite congregation members forward to be anointed as they enter on a journey to *pray, choose, and speak* for justice in the world. As we journey with God, we are always in need of pardon, forgiveness, and healing. The symbol of our salvation is the holy salve—the oil for anointing.

**Anointing Prayer:**

From ages past, you have been the God we have known.  
We come before you needing to start afresh. Restore us with your healing oil.  
We are the clay, you are the potter. Heal and remake us.  
Restore us, O Lord of Hosts.  
We give thanks for the grace that is within you.  
Together, we lack nothing. God will strengthen us.  
*(During anointing:)* Together, we lack nothing.  
God will strengthen us.

**Sermon Notes:**

Isaiah 64:1–9

The deep knowledge of the transgression of the people is met with Isaiah's confidence in the God who can redeem. In the face of overwhelming anger and despair about our quest for peace in Palestine and Israel, we want to scream with Isaiah to tear open the heavens and ask God to come down! Yet, it is this ONE God of ALL THE PEOPLES who has CHOSEN us—God is the potter, we are the clay. There is **hope**.

Psalms 80:1–7, 17–19

*Salve* for wounds and the word *salvation* share the same root. The singer's prayer for restoration calls us to be healed first. In order that we might proclaim **hope**, we need to feel restored and healed. Like a healing balm or salve on a burn or cut, so is God's healing and restoration of us through the anointing.

1 Corinthians 1:3–9

God is faithful and by God we have been called. Our fear, that we are not enough for the task of proclaiming peace and justice, is met by God's promise that we are not lacking in any spiritual gifts as we wait for the revelation of the Prince of Peace.

Mark 13:24–37

The fruit of another tree, the olive, teaches us a lesson, just as the fig tree puts forth its tender shoot. In apocalyptic visions such as Mark's, the prophet proclaims the world, not as it will be in some delayed second coming, but rather as it already is. The tender shoot announces rebirth into summer, just as the oil signals our anointing and blossoming as agents of God's shalom/salaam. We are called and chosen. The time is now. We are awake. We are ready for hope.

**ADVENT 2    December 10, 2017    Peace Begins from Within    Symbol: Soap**

**Scripture Image:** The Baptizer

**Liturgical Action:**

*(Worship leaders may find this action fits best as part of the response after a sermon.)*

After opening the box and taking out the soap, invite congregation members to remember that beneath the anxieties we carry, we have peace within us. Following the example of John the Baptist, invite the children or other leaders to wash the hands of those present using the soap and water in a basin. Washing reminds us that we are baptized with water in the spirit of **peace**.

**Prayer for Cleansing:**

Prepare the way of God.

Make clear in our lives a highway for our God.

You forgave the sins of your people;

you pardoned all our sins.

May we find our peace in God.

Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet in us today.

*(During washing:)* May I find my peace in God.

Steadfastness and love will meet in me today.

**Sermon Notes:**

Isaiah 40:1–11

The region of Gaza currently receives 2–3 hours of electricity a day (less than half of the 8 hours they are mandated to receive). Lack of consistent electricity puts the lives of people who are dependent on medical devices at risk, raises the cost of almost everything, and adversely affects everyone's mental well-being. **Peace** is only found from within, when we choose to be a comfort to people in the face of dire situations. The comfort of peace is that our God, who brings life from death in the world, is with us!

Psalms 85:1–2, 8–13

For the Holy One will speak peace to God's people. As we hear the urgent cries on the news, we know that God both comforts the oppressed and challenges us to act with faithfulness by following God's way. Old ways of anger and hate will be washed away and **peace** will be possible.

2 Peter 3:8–15a

Anxiety is a constant for those living with the harsh realities of occupation and insecurity in Palestine and Israel. Even as it faces the reality of persecution, the early church calls us to remember the eternal nature of God. Throughout these 50 years of the Israeli occupation of Palestine, God has been, and still is, working with us to bring about a just **peace**. While our anxieties represent our genuine concern and caring, we need to have faith that God is working through and beyond us. When we do this, we find peace for ourselves and the confidence to build peace with others.

Mark 1:1–8

Baptism is an act of washing clean. In our world, and for many centuries, soap has accompanied ordinary washing. When we repent for hurtful actions committed and loving actions omitted, we are cleansed. We come to know **peace** and we are ready to follow.

**ADVENT 3    December 17, 2017    Joy Feeds Us on Our Way    Symbol: Za'atar**

**Scriptural Image:** The Light

Liturgical Action:

*(Worship leaders might best fit this action into the response time in worship, following a sermon.)*

Before worship, use potpourri pots to fill the sanctuary with the smells of za'atar spices or other Middle Eastern spices such as allspice, cinnamon, and cardamom. It is a good idea to announce this intention the week before, and use only water with the spices suggested.

After opening the box, during an all ages/children's time, pour the za'atar into a bowl and invite congregants or children to smell the spice. Just as light fills a room, the aroma from spices can nourish us as we enter on a journey to *pray, choose, and speak* for justice in the world. As we go forth on our journey, the God who sustains us will feed us with **joy!**

**Prayer over the Spices:**

As rooms fill with the exotic scents of spices from other lands,  
we are nourished, fed, and inspired by your presence.

As invisible scents invoke memory and interest,  
we are reminded that your Spirit is among us.

We are reminded that there will be joy on the journey.

Thanks be to God.

**Sermon Notes:**

Isaiah 61:1–4, 8–11

Being filled with God's spirit and proclaiming the day of God's coming can be a joyful experience. Whether experiencing the camaraderie of songs in a protest march, or laughing at political satire that exposes the world as it is—intense **joy** is available in the midst of struggle, especially if we are working in solidarity with others locally or globally. Allowing ourselves to be fed by those experiences of joy will inspire us to complete our work.

Psalms 126

The promise of this psalm is that, as God restored the fortunes of Zion, those who go weeping to sow seeds will come home bringing in the sheaves with shouts of **joy**. These are powerful images for prayerful contemplation about hoped-for peace in Palestine and Israel. Take time to remember God's promise to the people of Israel—that they might live in God's shalom, God's peace. Those who sow seeds for peace and justice will come home with joy. Consider the joy of friendship between Israelis and Palestinians who have dared to cross that divide.

Luke 1:46b–55

Images from the Song of Mary include casting the powerful from their thrones, sending the rich away empty, and God remembering the promise to all of Abraham's descendants forever. Modern images can be just as powerful and joyful: young women from Palestine and Israel who protest, such as the partnership between two feminist women's organizations working for peace (see [www.j-c-w.org](http://www.j-c-w.org), Jerusalem Center for Women: What We Do: Peace Building); friendships formed between Israeli women at Machsom Watch ([www.machsomwatch.org/en](http://www.machsomwatch.org/en)) with Palestinians who must cross checkpoints; deep relationships made between families who have lost a family member to the conflict and now come to work together through the Families Forum (or Bereaved Parents Circle).

## Advent Peace Box Resources

### 1 Thessalonians 5:16–24

Rejoice always and do not allow negativity or despair to overwhelm us or quench the Spirit that God has placed within us. This is an urgent need among those who strive for peace in Palestine and Israel. Against hopelessness, imagine the excitement of pilgrims, from the three faiths that call Jerusalem holy, walking the narrowed streets of Jerusalem. Against despair, remember that even in conflict zones, children laugh and play. Remember that in this work of praying for peace in Palestine and Israel, we are joined with the faithful of every land and every creed, and most importantly, by the God who loves us all.

### John 1:6–8, 19–28

Witnessing God's emerging fullness of life, John preaches in a place of conflict, under occupation and under the scrutiny of warring religious leaders, even of his own tradition. We, like John, must continue to testify to the joy of God's promise of freedom. Then the light of God's joy will illuminate every crevice of our being and bring us the courage to take steps forward for peace. God's joy will strengthen the parts of our church where there might be reluctance.

**ADVENT 4      December 24, 2017      Love Calls Us to Act      Symbol: Map**

**Scriptural Image:** The Appearance of Angels

**Liturgical Action:**

*(Worship leaders might best fit this action into the response time in worship, following a sermon.)*

After opening the box, pass around a copy of the map of Palestine and Israel contained in the box. Some congregations will choose to display a map of this nature on their screen, or photocopy the map included in the box for all congregants. It is time to join the journey, the Unsettling Goods campaign to *pray, choose, and speak* for justice in the world. **Love** calls us forward.

*A version of the map suitable for projection can be downloaded at <http://visualizingpalestine.org/visuals/making-of-israel>.*

**Prayer over the Map:**

We have been journeying toward the land many call holy.  
With Mary and Joseph, with angels and donkeys, we move forward.  
We have been journeying away from our fears and insecurities.  
With oil we were chosen, anointed, and healed.  
With soap we were washed and restored.  
With spices we found joy on the journey.  
We have received a map of a land scarred by conflict, hard for us to navigate,  
and yet, we go forward holding the hand of those who love peace.  
We go forward on this journey, O God, with love—the only map we know.

**Sermon Notes:**

2 Samuel 7:1–11, 16

The tension in scripture, between God who wants no more than a tent, and the kings who want a temple, can still be seen at play in Palestine and Israel. In the self-sacrificing **love** known in the God of scripture, and revealed to us in Jesus, we see a kind of love that does not seek world status. More important is love that meets people's needs for peace and security. God's love, in this time of waiting, calls us to self-sacrificial acts for the benefit of all.

Luke 1:46b–55

The last five centuries of colonialism have created the heretical notion that God favours one kind of people over another (e.g., fair skinned over people of colour), which even churches have proclaimed. The song of a pregnant teen declares that eternal message of scripture: God looks with favour on the lowly, the oppressed, Mary, the hungry, and scatters the proud in their conceit.

Romans 16:25–27

The revelation of God made known in Jesus is the law of **love**.

Luke 1:26–38

An angel appears to a young girl, bestowing incredible power in the form of a fragile and tender baby. In all of this, the God-bearer is overwhelmed, as mothers are, with another gift. Besides a son born to greatness, Mary receives the gift of incredible love for this child. Later verses speak of the strength of this love tearing her heart apart—an emotion confirmed by those who have lost their children. What if we imagine an angelic appearance birthing in us an overwhelming love that compels us to act? What if we imagine that every child, made fearful by bombs and rocket fire, is our terrorized child? Can this Advent angel bring us that gift of incredible, soul wrenching love—a love against which it is impossible not to act for a just peace in Palestine and Israel? *Pray! Choose! Speak!*

## Going Beyond Worship into Workshops!

### Preparation for all Workshops

As a facilitator you may want to incorporate this process for developing a community covenant into your workshop. This may be particularly important given that the topic of Palestine/Israel can be a hot topic that can touch on deeply held beliefs.

*Community covenant:* Allow an extra 10 minutes at the beginning of each session to create a community covenant. Lay out your commitments for how to talk and listen and how to be with each other. Here are some general ideas. Post your covenant, and review it as needed at each session.

### Sample Community Covenant: Principles for Courageous Conversations

(Post in the meeting area. You might also want to print and hand out this list.)

*Disagree; don't attack. Listen carefully; listen with your heart.*

*Share the space and time.* If you are comfortable speaking and tend to speak a lot, step back. If you are reluctant to speak, push yourself gently and try to step up.

*Keep confidentiality.* What is said in the group stays in the group. *Take very seriously how our own faith, theology, church, and country may have contributed* to issues at the heart of the conflict, including antisemitism, Islamophobia, racism, and colonization.

*Don't be frightened by strong reactions,* including your own; but don't let strong reactions define or derail the entire conversation. If you react strongly during a conversation, ask why you're reacting and to what you are reacting. Try to reflect on how a comment or conversation might be challenging a wider set of values or a personal framework.

*Question your own biases and frames:* All of us approach life with a set of values, learned from our cultures, communities, families, and faith. These can surface abruptly when we get into difficult conversations or disagreements, especially when we're passionate about a given topic. Few of us start any conversation about Israel and Palestine with a completely blank slate, because it has been a hot topic for so long.

*Use your own thoughts and reflections,* not talking points from someone else. Use "I" statements, and don't speak for others.

*Don't use talking points from someone else.* When we talk about Israel and Palestine, it's easy and tempting to repeat standard talking points and myths—"Palestinians don't really want peace." "The church should not be involved in politics." "There will never be peace in Palestine and Israel." Sometimes it seems that the dominant dialogue is made up of people picking their one-liners from a basket and throwing them at each other. Too rarely do we stop and ask how the basket got there, where its contents come from, and whether they're even partially true.

## Workshop Option 1: Preparing for Christmas

(approx. 2.5 hours, including break)

### Materials:

- nativity set
- Christmas decoration
- cardboard or recyclable materials to build a “separation barrier”
- objects from Israel and Palestine (optional)
- projector and computer with Internet access to show an online video and images

**Introduction:** This is a time for decorating the worship or meeting space with the intention of turning our hearts and minds toward the birthplace of a baby in Bethlehem, to a humble Jewish family. As we deepen our awareness of the current challenges for the people living there, we express our prayers and hopes for peace wherever there are divisions in our own lives and in Israel and Palestine.

**Hymn:** “O Little Town of Bethlehem” (VU 64)

**Scripture:** Micah 5:1-5a

One person can read this passage to the whole group.

**Decorating the space:** *This is an activity for a group to participate in.*

Lay out Christmas decorations in your sanctuary or meeting room ahead of time. These might be decorations you use every year or new creations made by the congregation. If you have a Christmas tree, this might be a time you would like to decorate it together. If you have anything from Israel and Palestine, such as olive wood objects or images, include it along with your decorations.

Think about where and how the Advent Peace Box can be featured in the space. The box could be wrapped up in a special way.

Include a nativity set as part of your decoration and make a “separation barrier” to go with it (i.e., dividing Mary, Joseph, the Wise Ones from the stable, shepherds, and animals). The separation barrier construction began in 2001. It is eight metres tall, about four-and-a-half times taller than the average adult. It does not follow the proposed border between Israel and Palestine (the “green line”), but cuts into the Palestinian territory. Measure your nativity figures and make a wall that is four-and-a-half times taller than they are. You could build it out of cardboard, wire, wood, or any recyclable materials on hand. Place your nativity figures and the wall in a place where they can be seen.

**Story:** *Read together this story from the Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb, pastor of the Christmas Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bethlehem.*

## Christmas, Peace, and the Wall

A few years ago while travelling in China, I was asked by a student in one of the schools: “What if Jesus was to be born today?” I replied: “If Jesus were to be born this year, he would not be born in Bethlehem. Mary and Joseph might not be allowed to enter from the checkpoint, and so too the Magi, while the shepherds will be stuck inside the walls and can’t leave their little town. Jesus might have been born on the checkpoint like so many Palestinian children, while the Magi and shepherds would be on both sides of the wall.”

Am I confusing you with the “nice” Christmas story? Christmas has become a “nice” feast of “a sort of peace” that no one really can fully describe. In fact, it is kind of a “cheap peace,” which is something to preach about when one is not well prepared, or a bit of wishful thinking, when one is not ready to do much. Christmas has become a season for “joyful peace talkers,” rather than “blessed peacemakers.”

In our Palestinian context, “peace talk” is often a good recipe for managing the conflict rather than resolving it. As the world continues to talk peace, Israel continues to build the wall and while Christians continue singing “O little town of Bethlehem,” Israel makes sure that this town stays as little as possible. As little as a two-square-mile open air prison with walls, fences, and trenches with no future expansion possibilities whatsoever.

No one understood peace as did St. Paul. He, a former Jewish leader, a zealot, a persecutor, and a hardliner, committed himself to making sure that a wall of separation was built and kept between his community and its enemies. He was ready to attack and even terrorize whoever dared to question the importance of this wall for the security of his community. However, this same radical person was radically transformed. He had a unique encounter that made him discover the real meaning of peace, and he described it as *breaking down dividing walls of hostility* (Ephesians 2:14). From that moment, the zealot Saul became the passionate apostle Paul. His great discovery was that if God himself in Christ has broken the walls of hostility between the human and the divine, then there is no place for walls between peoples, tribes, cultures, and nations. For his conviction, he was ready to pay a heavy price.

At a time when a wall of hostility has been built around our little town, we all need to commit ourselves anew to breaking down all walls of hatred and hostilities, be they concrete walls of ideological, racial, political, social, and economical ones. From the hometown of Christ, we have no other message this year but that of St. Paul: “For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us” (Ephesians 2:14).

—Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb.

Published by Kairos Palestine, *Christmas Alert 2012* (pp.21-22).

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## Advent Peace Box Resources

**Video:** This video portrays the checkpoint in Bethlehem. It illustrates a side to Bethlehem we might not see very often. Watch the video together: <https://machsomwatch.org/en/node/51242>.

*One person can read aloud to the group this example related to the checkpoints:*

MachsomWatch is a volunteer organization of Israeli women peace activists who oppose the occupation of Palestine. On a daily basis since 2001, they monitor the West Bank checkpoints, the separation fences, the agricultural gates, the military courts, and Palestinian villages. They bring attention to the hardship created for Palestinians and how the occupation corrodes Israeli society and democratic values.

**Sing or read together:** “O Town of Bethlehem” by Juanita Austin (an original hymn, which follows) and/or “Though Ancient Walls” (VU 691)

**Learn from online sources:** Learn about the Bethlehem Sumud Choir, a group of women, who give concerts near the wall in Bethlehem.

<http://thisweekinpalestine.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Spiritual-Tourism.pdf>

If you have a projector, go to the Palestine-Israel Journal site, where the article “The West Bank Wall as Canvas” ([www.pij.org/details.php?id=1350](http://www.pij.org/details.php?id=1350)) shows examples of art and messages on the separation barrier in Bethlehem and other parts of the West Bank. These are examples of non-violent resistance.

**Prayer:** After hearing these different stories of struggle, hope, and resistance, write or draw on a small piece of paper:

- What divides us from one another (in our families/church/community/world)?
- What are your prayers and hopes for peace and transformation (for yourself/family/community/Israel and Palestine/world)?

Take these papers and stick them onto the “separation barrier” you have constructed, or make them into a garland for decorating your space. You can add to these prayers for peace throughout Advent.

**Closing Hymns:** “I Am Walking a Path of Peace” (MV 221); “O Town of Bethlehem” by Juanita Austin (follows)

## O Town of Bethlehem

*Words & music by Juanita Austin, January 2014*

O town of Bethlehem, how we see thee lie,  
Caught amid your peoples' fears –  
This wall blocks out the sky  
O town of Bethlehem, how can we sleep?  
As you are imprisoned, I hear your people weep.

*O little town of Beth-le-hem.  
How still we see you lie.  
Waiting at the mercy of our outraged cry.*

If my name were Mary and I laboured at your gate,  
Would my child die helpless,  
Locked out by fear and hate?

If my name were Joseph, would there be a test?  
Would you check my fam'ly name?  
Would I face arrest?

*O little town of Beth-le-hem, do you ask us why  
We remain so silent as we watch your people die?*

O town of Bethlehem, O town of Bethlehem...

*This lament is a play on the words of the beautiful Christmas carol, but it also integrates the painful experience of occupation in Palestine. This includes Palestinians' restrictions of movement and passing through military checkpoints along the wall—a difficult experience for pregnant women in labour needing medical attention. Many babies have been born at security checkpoints because they were closed or the military did not let the women pass through to the hospital. (United Nations, "Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the issue of Palestinian pregnant women giving birth at Israeli checkpoints," 21 January 2010.)*

# O Town of Bethlehem

words & music by Juanita Austin

O town of Beth - le - hem  
If my name were Ma - ry  
(and I) How we see thee lie  
la - boured at your gate

8 Caught a - mid your peo - ples' fears  
Would my child die help - less  
This wall blocks out the  
Locked out by fear and

15 sky. O town of Beth - le - hem  
hate? If my name were Jo - seph  
How  
Would

22 can we sleep?  
there be a test?  
As you are im - pri - soned  
Would you check my fam - 'ly name? I

29 hear your peo - ple weep.  
Would I face ar - rest?  
O lit - tle town of Beth - le -  
O lit - tle town of Beth - le -

36 hem How still we see thee lie  
hem Do you ask us why  
Wait - ing at the  
We re - main so

43 mer - cy  
si - lent  
(and) as we of our out - raged  
cry.  
die?  
1.

49 2. C9  
O town of Beth - le - hem  
O town of Beth - le - hem  
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## Workshop Option 2: Shrinking Map

*(approx. 2 hours, including break)*

### Materials:

- maps
- Unsettling Goods actions cards (search “Unsettling Goods action card” on [www.united-church.ca](http://www.united-church.ca))
- Christmas cards
- Shrinking Map exercise supplies (fabric and paper)
- projector and computer with Internet access

**Introductions:** Share your name and why you came to this workshop. Ask if anyone has been to Israel and Palestine before or what they know about the area.

### About the situation

1. Watch the 6.5-minute video “Israel & Palestine: A Very Short Introduction” by Jewish Voice for Peace (<https://jewishvoiceforpeace.org/israeli-palestinian-conflict-101>). This is an accessible introduction to the situation.
2. The United Church’s “Let’s Keep Talking” series of videos encourages courageous conversations about just peace in Palestine and Israel. The playlist is available on the United Church’s YouTube channel ([www.youtube.com/unitedchurchofcanada](http://www.youtube.com/unitedchurchofcanada)), or by searching [www.united-church.ca](http://www.united-church.ca) for “Let’s Keep Talking” resources. Explore some of these key topics and questions: “Be Not Afraid,” “Should The Church Be Involved in Politics?” “Is the United Church Antisemitic?” “Will There Ever Be Peace in Palestine and Israel?”

After each video, or at the end, ask:

1. What questions remain for you?
2. What insights or new information did you learn?

Begin to talk through one or two questions in direct, respectful conversation. Leave space for both truth-telling and disagreement. One person at a time should speak; either go around the circle, or ensure that the facilitators are keeping track of who might want to speak and has not. See process for developing a community covenant (p. 17).

**Entering the stories:** Create four small groups and give each group one of the themes to work with—Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. Give each group a story to read together (pp. 7–10).

### Questions for small group conversation

1. Who is involved in this story? Name all the different people involved.
2. Discuss what it might feel like to be each person in the story.

Share any highlights from your story with the whole group.

## Shrinking Map Exercise

*Background:* This experiential exercise is intended to help people reflect on restriction of movement, the shrinking of the Palestinian territories and the separation barrier (or “wall”). This does not need to be explained to the participants before the exercise. Let them experience it and draw their own conclusions and insights.

### *Materials:*

- Small pieces of paper: one for each person in the group, plus a few extras. Half the papers should be blue and the other half yellow (or choose any two colours or textures of you have available). These papers represent identity cards.
- Several pieces of large fabric (sheets, blankets, or large towels) that you can lay on the floor for people to walk on during the exercise. (If people feel comfortable, they can take off their shoes so the fabric doesn’t get dirty). The fabric represents land. With a group of 15 people, for instance, 6–8 twin sheets would suffice.
- A copy of the map from the Advent Peace Box.
- A large enough room for your group to comfortably stand in a circle arm’s-length apart. (Clear away any chairs or tables so there is lots of open space).

**Step 1:** Provide each person with a small piece of paper—half the group receives blue and the other yellow. Don’t tell them what it is for yet.

**Step 2:** Ask people to mill around the room—make eye contact with one another, smile, shake hands if they like. While people are doing this, slowly spread out a few pieces of fabric on the floor, holding onto a few for later. The edges of the fabric can be touching so as to make one contiguous piece.

**Step 3:** Ask all the people with blue papers to walk *only* on the fabric. The other people can walk anywhere they like in the room *and* on the fabric.

**Step 4:** Slowly make the surface area of the fabric smaller while people are still walking around (crumple it up or fold the pieces). Ask people to pay attention to how they feel (and notice how people are reacting—with words, gestures, etc.).

**Step 5:** Spread out the fabric that is already on the floor to form two islands or more (not connected to one another). Make one of the islands that has some people on it far away from the others.

**Step 6:** Give out some yellow papers to those who have blue papers. Now they can walk anywhere. After a short time, take some of those blue papers away so they can only walk on the fabric again.

**Step 7:** Ask about two-thirds of the people with yellow papers to stay off the fabrics. They can only walk on the bare floor now. (The other third can still walk wherever they want.)

**Step 8:** Ask some people (more than two) with yellow papers to hold up one or two pieces of fabric (forming a wall). Ask them to hold it up in such a way that people with blue cards (who can only walk on the fabric on the ground) can’t see each other. Ask these people to hold the sheet up for at least two minutes or until their arms get tired before ending the activity. Ask people to pay attention to how they feel (and notice how people are reacting—with words, gestures, etc.).

**Step 9:** Wrap up the activity by asking everyone to form a large circle again. Ask them to do something physical (shake their arms and legs, quick stretch, maybe a drink of water) and remind them they are now out of those roles and back to being themselves here at the workshop.

### **Debrief the Activity:**

- How did you feel? What did you notice about how you or others were behaving?
- How did it feel to be able to walk wherever you wanted? to only be able to walk on the fabric?

## Advent Peace Box Resources

- How did it feel when those pieces of fabric got smaller and smaller?
- How did it feel to hold up the piece of fabric?
- How did it feel not being able to see each other around the piece of fabric being held up?

After people have had sufficient time to debrief their own personal experience, bring the conversation back around to Israel and Palestine. Share the map of Israel and Palestine that came in the Advent Peace Box with the group.

- What do you notice?
- What parts of this exercise can you relate to what you have learned about Israel and Palestine?

### What you can do?

Introduce Unsettling Goods: see “About the Unsettling Goods Campaign” (p. 4).

Hand out Unsettling Goods action cards, inviting participants to consider what next steps they might take.

Let the group know about Israeli and Palestinian groups working for peace and justice (sharing information from the Additional Resources list, pp. 29–30). Highlight upcoming events or volunteer opportunities (Sabeel, EAPPI, ICAHD).

### Christmas cards

Christmas is a time of gift giving. This year, let’s raise awareness about the products we want to support and those we don’t because they are part of the conflict in Israel and Palestine.

We (United Church of Canada, United Church of Christ, and American ecumenical partners) are currently in conversation with PayPal requesting them to extend services to West Bank and Gaza Palestinians; and cease extending services to the illegal settlements ([www.united-church.ca/social-action/act-now/urge-paypal-extend-its-services-palestinians](http://www.united-church.ca/social-action/act-now/urge-paypal-extend-its-services-palestinians)).

We invite you to send a Christmas card to PayPal sharing this request. Feel free to make a lovely card or to use one you received from a charity. The mailing address and card content are at the link above.

Make Christmas cards for friends and family. In the card include a message about what you learned at the workshop. (*Today we learned about what is going on in Israel and Palestine. This made me feel... I wanted to share with you some economic actions we can take...*).

Purchasing online gifts is an easy way to get your shopping done. Does the company you are buying from or the charity you are donating to use PayPal? Share our Take Action with them and suggest that they engage in consumer action with you by expressing their concerns about the inequity between Palestinian and Israeli access to PayPal services.

Choose to make your gifts fair trade goods and share the Zatoun website (<http://zatoun.com>) with friends and family so they can join you in making this choice.

**Please post on social media about your Christmas letters and action to inspire others to**

***Pray! Choose! Speak!***

Search “Unsettling Goods Get Tweeting” on [www.united-church.ca](http://www.united-church.ca) for some social media tips.

## Introducing the Advent Peace Box at Meetings

(6–10 minutes)

You will need copies of the *Additional Resources list* (pp. 29–30) and the *Unsettling Goods action card*. Search “Unsettling Goods action card” on [www.united-church.ca](http://www.united-church.ca).

**Prayer:** As we gather in your name, O God, help us to extend your grace, open the gates of your kingdom, and invite all people and all of Creation to enter in. Help us, we pray, as we live into that invitation in the name of Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Scripture:** Psalm 80:1–7

**Reader:** There have been too many innocent lives lost; too many people torn by the violence of the occupation; too many people living in fear and torment. The Psalm speaks to the need for hope and liberation for all, Palestinians and Israelis. This can only come from a just end to the occupation. (*Read “About the Unsettling Goods Campaign” and “About Zatoun Products” on p. 4.*)

**Opening the Box:** This is the Peace Box (*lift out each item as you speak of it*). Inside the box we find these things:

*Zatoun olive oil.* Oil is used for cooking or making dressing for salads, but it is also used to anoint people. Anointing with oil helps us remember the hope of God’s promises and that we have all been anointed as God’s beloved children. As we have been given hope by God, we are called to share hope with others by resisting evil, seeking justice, and loving kindness (Micah 6:8).

*Soap.* We use soap in the shower or bath to wash away the dirt that comes with our daily life. As we are immersed daily in God’s grace, we are showered with the baptizing power of the Holy Spirit, which enables us to know and live in the peace of Christ.

*Za’atar spices.* The smell of spices stirs our appetites and makes our food taste so much better. Eating becomes more than a necessity. We look forward to each meal with delight. Many people also use spice as incense—a way of offering prayers to God. A liberal sprinkling of God’s love and grace sustains and delights us so that when we approach our search for justice and mercy, it is not a duty—it is a joy!

*A map.* This map shows us how the land of Palestinians has been diminished and controlled by Israeli military force. Its lines tell the story of oppression and suffering. God calls us to build each other up in love. Love calls us to take action.

Some of us may know quite a bit about the history and the current events in Palestine and Israel. Some of us may know very little. Some of us have questions. Some of us may believe it is too complicated a situation to wrestle with. Some of us may be ready to learn more and get involved. (*Distribute copies of the Additional Resources list and Unsettling Goods Action Cards.*)

Here is resource sheet listing information sites on the Web where we can read analysis of the history and events in Palestine and Israel, hear the stories of people who either live there or have visited, and learn what actions some people are taking to realize the hope of peace in the Holy Land. Are you ready to *pray, choose, and speak*? Let’s close with the following scripture:

**Scripture:** 1 Thessalonians 3:9–13. Amen.

*Have the extra Zatoun products available for sale at break or after meeting.*

## I have used this all before. How do I make it new?

*Thanks for ordering once more!* Having Zatoun products and “Let’s Keep Talking” resources available and visible in your communities during Advent lets people know that you care about building a peaceable future for our sisters, brothers, and cousins in Palestine and Israel. Order these conversation starters and sell products that support Palestinian farmer all year long. Zatoun can, within reason, customize your box or send additional product (<http://zatoun.com>).

It usually takes multiple exposures to a topic before individuals feel that they understand it and are equipped to raise their voices and take action. This could be the year that Just Peace for Palestine and Israel makes sense for someone in your community and they join you in taking action.

### Current Context: This Moment

June 5, 2017, marks 50 years since the end of the Six-Day War and the beginning of Israeli military occupation in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. To mark this date, our Christian brothers, sisters, and cousins in Palestine recently sent this message: “We stand facing the impossible, but we have not lost hope, since as followers of the Risen One, we are the people of hope. However, we need you and we need you now more than ever. We need your costly solidarity. We need brave women and men who are willing to stand in the forefront. This is no time for shallow diplomacy Christians. We urge you to hear our call...”

(<http://www.kairopalestine.ps/index.php/component/content/article/26-english/resources/statements/231-nccop-open-letter-to-the-wcc>)

### Making Connections to Resources

**No Way to Treat a Child** is a campaign of Mission & Service partner Defense for Children International – Palestine. This campaign has now been launched in Canada and we are working together to raise new voices against the mistreatment of children in Palestine. You will find an introductory postcard in your box.



- Visit the website ([www.nowaytotreatachild.ca](http://www.nowaytotreatachild.ca)) and sign the petition in the “Do Something” section.
- Make the petition available in your place of worship throughout Advent.
- On Advent 3, December 17, when you share the “joy” story of Palestinian children, you may wish to highlight this campaign focused on the mistreatment of children in Israeli military detention.

**“Let’s Keep Talking” resources** are a great way for people to engage in “courageous conversations” about just peace in Palestine and Israel. These resources are designed to help participants move beyond some of the myths, barriers, and questions that hold many of us back from fully engaging in the United Church’s Unsettling Goods campaign.



- Cut and paste the conversation starter questions into your weekly bulletin or Advent newsletter. They are found on the USB stick in your box or on our website at [www.united-church.ca/social-action/justice-initiatives/lets-keep-talking](http://www.united-church.ca/social-action/justice-initiatives/lets-keep-talking). Thanks to a user from last year who gave us this idea!
- Play the videos before worship or as part of a reflection in the context of the service. These videos answer some questions like these:
  - Is the United Church boycotting Israel?
  - Did God give Israel the land?
  - Are Palestinians terrorists?
  - Is the United Church antisemitic? (Advent 1, December 3)
  - Will there ever be peace in Palestine and Israel? (Advent 2, December 10)
- Explore video or written resources in a small discussion group—last year someone did this with their congregational Outreach Committee.
- Looking for other worship suggestions or feel like you have used the ones in this kit enough? Check out Unsettling Goods worship resources: [www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/resources/unsettling-goods-worship-resources.pdf](http://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/resources/unsettling-goods-worship-resources.pdf)

**The World Council of Churches’ 12 Faces of Hope campaign** offers written and video reflections on hope that you could use on Hope Sunday. Jean Zaru’s written reflection would be appropriate for Peace Sunday too. Videos are very short (1 to 2 minutes long) and could be used before or during worship. [www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/12-faces-of-hope](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/12-faces-of-hope)

**Urge PayPal to extend its services to Palestinians** ([www.united-church.ca/social-action/act-now/urge-paypal-extend-its-services-palestinians](http://www.united-church.ca/social-action/act-now/urge-paypal-extend-its-services-palestinians)). Several United Church people across the country have taken the sample letters and customized them for their local MPs or created space for people to fill in their MP’s name. Print copies and make them available after church for people to sign. They can be mailed for free. You can find your MP’s address at <https://lop.parl.ca/ParlInfo/Compilations/HouseOfCommons/MemberByPostalCode.aspx?Menu=HOC>

**Invite someone to speak at your church.** Contact [unsettling-goods@united-church.ca](mailto:unsettling-goods@united-church.ca), and we’ll try to put you in touch with someone who has spent time in Palestine and wants to share their experiences and first-hand stories.

## Additional Resources

### **The United Church's Unsettling Goods: Choose Peace in Palestine and Israel Campaign**

[www.united-church.ca/social-action/justice-initiatives/unsettling-goods-choose-peace-palestine-and-israel](http://www.united-church.ca/social-action/justice-initiatives/unsettling-goods-choose-peace-palestine-and-israel)

Members are invited to “Pray, Choose, Speak for Peace in Palestine and Israel.” The 41st General Council in 2012 called on United Church members to take concrete actions to support the end of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories. The “Let’s Keep Talking” videos, worship and meeting resources address some of the most common questions about the campaign.

### **Kairos Palestine**

[www.kairospalestine.ps](http://www.kairospalestine.ps)

The Christian Palestinians’ word to the world about what is happening in Palestine—“a word of faith, hope, and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering.” Check out their Christmas Alert 2017:

[www.kairospalestine.ps/index.php/kairos-palestine-blog/29-english/resources/christmas-alerts](http://www.kairospalestine.ps/index.php/kairos-palestine-blog/29-english/resources/christmas-alerts)

and the National Coalition of Christian Organizations in Palestine’s June 2017 open letter to the

World Council of Churches: [www.kairospalestine.ps/index.php/component/content/article/](http://www.kairospalestine.ps/index.php/component/content/article/26-english/resources/statements/231-nccop-open-letter-to-the-wcc)

[26-english/resources/statements/231-nccop-open-letter-to-the-wcc](http://www.kairospalestine.ps/index.php/component/content/article/26-english/resources/statements/231-nccop-open-letter-to-the-wcc)

### **BIMKOM—Planners for Planning Rights**

<http://bimkom.org/eng>

An Israeli non-profit organization formed in 1999 by a group of planners and architects, in order to strengthen democracy and human rights in the field of planning. Planning policies plays a crucial role in quality of our life, the environment, socio-economic development, and well-being.

### **Breaking the Silence**

[www.breakingthesilence.org.il](http://www.breakingthesilence.org.il)

An organization founded in 2004 by veterans who served in the Israeli military that collects and publishes testimonies from Israeli soldiers to expose the public to the reality of everyday life in the occupied Palestinian territories.

### **B’Tselem—The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories**

<http://www.btselem.org>

Established in February 1989 by a group of prominent academics, attorneys, journalists, and Knesset members, B’Tselem documents and educates the Israeli public and policymakers about human rights violations in the occupied territories, combats public denial, and aims to help create a human rights culture in Israel.

### **The Jerusalem Fund**

[www.thejerusalemfund.org](http://www.thejerusalemfund.org)

An independent, non-profit, non-political, non-sectarian organization based in Washington, D.C. It gives voice to the Palestinian narrative through policy briefings, lecture series, conferences, symposia, scholarly research publications, and an extensive research library.

### **Jewish Voice for Peace**

<https://jewishvoiceforpeace.org/content/israeli-palestinian-conflict-101>

A national Jewish organization based in the United States that provides a voice for Jews and allies who believe that peace in the Middle East will be achieved through justice and full equality for both Palestinians and Israelis.

### **Kairos USA**

[www.kairosusa.org](http://www.kairosusa.org)

A movement to unify and mobilize American Christians to take a prophetic stance for a just peace in Israel and Palestine.

### **MachsomWatch**

[www.machsomwatch.org](http://www.machsomwatch.org)

A volunteer organization composed of Israeli women peace activists who oppose the occupation of Palestine. Daily since 2001, they monitor the West Bank checkpoints, the separation fences, the agricultural gates, the military courts and Palestinian villages. They bring attention to the hardship created for Palestinians and how the occupation corrodes Israeli society and democratic values.

### **No Way to Treat a Child Canada – Defense for Children International – Palestine**

[www.nowaytotreatachild.ca](http://www.nowaytotreatachild.ca)

The No Way to Treat a Child campaign seeks to challenge Israel's prolonged military occupation of Palestinians by exposing widespread and systematic ill-treatment of Palestinian children in the Israeli military detention system. This campaign has been newly expanded to Canada with a coalition of partners.

### **The Parents Circle—Families Forum (PCFF)**

[www.theparentscircle.com](http://www.theparentscircle.com)

A joint Palestinian Israeli organization of over 600 families, all of whom have lost a close family member as a result of the prolonged conflict. Joint activities have shown that the reconciliation between individuals and nations is possible and it is this insight that they are trying to pass on to both sides of the conflict.

### **Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center**

[www.sabeel.org](http://www.sabeel.org)

An ecumenical grassroots liberation theology movement among Palestinian Christians. Inspired by the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, this liberation theology seeks to deepen the faith of Palestinian Christians, to promote unity among them and lead them to act for justice and peace.

### **United Network for a Just Peace in Palestine and Israel**

[www.unjppi.org](http://www.unjppi.org)

A network of United Church people and others working toward the goal of a just peace in Palestine and Israel by calling for an end to the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands and equal rights for all who live in Palestine/Israel through education and advocacy.

### **Voices of Accompaniment**

<http://blogs.united-church.ca/accompaniment>

United Church participants in the World Council of Church's Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme write about Israel and Palestine.