

**WORKING GROUP ON THE MIDDLE EAST**  
**Report to Metropolitan Chicago Synod Assembly**  
**6-6/7-08**

The Working Group on the Middle East (WGME) functions under the auspices of the Proclamation Team. The WG has adopted the following mission statement:

*Led by the Holy Spirit, the Working Group on the Middle East of the Metropolitan Chicago Synod, ELCA will educate and urge the Metropolitan Chicago Synod to advocate actively for justice for Palestine and Israel, which will lead to peace in the Middle East to ensure free access to the holy sites for Jews, Christians, and Muslims.*

In order to carry out its mission, the WG has three objectives:

1. EDUCATION:
  - A. To promote understanding of the status of Christians in the Holy Land.
  - B. To build relationships among Christians, Jews and Muslims.
  - C. To help U.S. Christians become involved in Middle East peacemaking.
  - D. To confront misuse of Holy Scripture in exploiting fear or justifying aggression.
  - E. To present an overall view of Middle East issues.
2. ADVOCACY:
  - A. To work with a national network of advocates.
  - B. To link advocacy with prayer.
  - C. To follow the lead of ELCA policies.
  - D. To work with a few selected issues.
3. CONTACT WITH THE MIDDLE EAST
  - A. To promote visits to the region by Church and lay leaders.
  - B. To hear from Church leaders and other religious persons from the region who are visiting in the U.S.

The WG meets monthly on the third Tuesday , 7:30-9:00 pm at Grace Lutheran Church, LaGrange. New members are always welcome.

**WORKING GROUP'S ACTIVITIES SINCE THE LAST ASSEMBLY**

July, '07: Promoted Bishop Munib Younan's appearance at Atonement, Barrington during the Churchwide Assembly.

WG facilitated the delivery of petitions (signed during the Synod Assembly) to congressional representatives and senators.

July – October, '07: Preparation and arrangements were made for the November Event.

Four presentations were made: Atonement, Grace (LaGrange), St. Luke's (Logan Square), and St. James (Chicago, Foster Ave.)

Nov. '07: Held a Solidarity with Palestinians Event in response to last year's resolution, "To Support the Christians in the Holy Land", at Grace, LaGrange. One hundred and fifty-eight persons attended. There was good food and live Palestinian entertainment. Speakers included Bishop Wayne Miller, Gus Khoury, Anis Said, Mai Kakish, Jesse Bacon, Kerry Mohammed, Pr. Robert Smith, and Pr. Twila Schock. The combined choirs of Grace and Atonement provided special music.

Jan., '08: A mailing went out to every synodical congregation with a report from the Solidarity Event, new WGME brochures (available at this Assembly's display area), and a solicitation for invitations to congregations for the purpose of education.

Feb., '08: WG regretfully received from Del and Gretchen Leppke that they had to take an extended break from the committee for personal reasons. This represents a great loss to the WG and to the Synod. We wish them well. The WG planned a special recognition dinner/gathering for the end of April.

April-May, '08: Preparation and arrangements for participation in Synod Assembly, including resolution, display, and workshop.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Pr. Paul Koch, Convenor