

Session Six

6th Principle:

The Goal of World Community with Peace, Liberty and Justice for All

The Way Forward

- Hope
- Reconciliation

Pre-reading/listening:

Supporting Peace with Justice, Dealing with Violence and Nonviolence, and Maintaining Hope

Read the blog post by Christian anti-racism/anti-oppression activist Ben Irwin, “Stop Praying for Peace in Baltimore,” at <http://benirwin.me/2015/05/01/stop-praying-for-peace-in-baltimore/>

The Holy Land Trust’s [Peace and Research Learning Center](http://www.holylandtrust.org/peace-research--learning-center.html), <http://www.holylandtrust.org/peace-research--learning-center.html>, Bethlehem

Audio file: Inaugural Theodore Parker Lecture in December 2014 by Rabbi Brian Walt, “The Prophetic Challenge: Breaking Silence, Speaking Truth” at <http://www.tparkerchurch.org/2014/12/theodore-parker-lecture/>

FAQ – Right of Return: <http://www.badil.org/en/documents/category/30-materials-for-print?download=344%3Aprint-q-a>

Activities

Palestinian Gandhi Project, <http://palestinian-gandhi.tumblr.com/>

TED Talk, [Can I Reconcile with the Man Who Killed My Son?](http://youtu.be/faDSK_vVg_A) http://youtu.be/faDSK_vVg_A, 5 minutes

Video of support rally for Israeli conscientious objector Natan Blanc, <http://972mag.com/watch-support-vigil-for-imprisoned-conscientious-objector-natan-blanc/71748/>, jailed nine times for refusing to serve in the army, 2:30 minutes

Principle 6: The Goal of World Community with Peace, Liberty and Justice for All

Session Six features peace-with-justice activists who are leading the way in the search for “peace, liberty and justice for all.”

Prereadings

Five Smooth Stones

The UU religion has no set creed. To add strength to the quest to live a life based on UU values, James Luther Adams, a Unitarian Universalist minister, wrote about the five smooth stones of liberal religion. These stones arose from the five smooth stones that David picked up to use against Goliath in the Bible story. The analogy is that life is full of struggles, and we need a set of tools with which to engage in struggles of life based on our values as adherents of a liberal religion. Here is shorthand for the five tools for living:

1. Revelation is continuous.
2. Relationships ought to rest on mutual and free consent.
3. We need to work together for just and loving community.
4. We have a commitment to express our faith in society.
5. Live in hope.

There are plentiful resources in the world to give us hope for making a difference.

Source: Blog post of Greg Smith at <http://sowhatfaith.com/2011/05/13/5-smooth-stones-of-liberal-religion/>.

Supporting Peace with Justice, Dealing with Violence and Nonviolence, and Maintaining Hope

How will peace, liberty, and justice for Israelis and Palestinians be achieved? Peace talks have not accomplished the goal.

The vast majority of Palestinian reaction to displacement and occupation in the West Bank and Gaza has been nonviolent resistance, and some will tell you that existence is resistance: Palestinians are expressing resistance by continuing to try to live their lives and seek a living while under occupation. Oppression can lead also to violent action. The Palestinian uprisings, or intifadas, saw many Palestinian youths burning tires, and throwing rocks and Molotov cocktails at Israeli army patrols. Palestinian terrorists in the form of more than 300 Palestinian suicide bombers wreaked havoc in the 1990s to 2008, with hundreds of Israeli civilians, primarily Jewish, becoming victims of these attacks. Thousands of rockets have been launched by Palestinian militants toward Israel from Gaza in the past decade, the vast majority into civilian areas, internationally condemned. Some fear that if there is a Palestinian state with Hamas in the leadership, Jewish lives would be in great danger. Understandable concerns are voiced about Hamas. However, evidence from the six-month cease fire from 2008 that preceded the 2008-2009 Gaza war showed the organization's ability to suppress rocket fire to near-zero levels, until Israel violated the cease-fire and started an assault. A report has some interesting tables and comparisons of Israeli mortar fire, Palestinian rocket fire, and correlation with periods of ceasefire is available at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/data/pdf/PDF_19045_2.pdf.

It is also important to consider that Palestinians are not monolithic; not all support Hamas. To think that Palestinian society is monolithic is a manifestation of racist thinking. And ultimately, the main principle to be supported is the call of Palestinians to have their human rights upheld and the wrongs done to them addressed in the world, just as we uphold the rights of Jews and condemn anti-Semitism, or any other oppressed group.

There are additional Palestinian and Jewish rights struggles in Israel. There are more than a million Palestinians living in Israel, some of whom were displaced during the Nakba. Palestinian citizens of Israel experience discrimination and several of their municipalities do not receive equitable funding. There are robust movements for civil rights for Israeli Palestinians. Ethiopian Jews often face discrimination in Israel, and they also have organized for their rights. Israeli Jews demonstrating against the 2015 war in Gaza were often subjected to violent attacks and threats. There is much work to do around rights.

As has been established in the resources accompanying this study guide, there have been acts of terrorism perpetrated against Palestinians by Zionist Jews leading up to the creation of Israel and by Israeli Jews against Palestinians thereafter. Palestinians have been more widely highlighted in the media for their acts of terrorism against civilians. Many Americans are concerned that the current leadership of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, Hamas, cannot be trusted to refrain from attacking Israel militarily in the event of the establishment of a Palestinian state. There are important facts to learn about the context of rocket fire from Gaza, and the extreme disparity in military might between the Israeli forces and the Gaza resistance fighters. Sources claim that the rocket attacks can clearly be shown to be associated with Israeli acts of provocation such as arrest sweeps in the West Bank. See the infographic by Visualizing Palestine, [Palestinian and Israeli Deaths](http://visualizingpalestine.org/visuals/timeline-of-violence?v=large) (<http://visualizingpalestine.org/visuals/timeline-of-violence?v=large>). Read the post by a staff person of American Friends Service Committee that offers important insights regarding violence by Palestinians, and by rocket fire from Gaza <http://afsc.org/story/will-israel-recognize-palestinians%E2%80%99-right-exist>.

What kind of violence is acceptable among Unitarian Universalists in the case of oppression? Is any violence acceptable in resisting oppression? This is definitely a matter of individual opinion among Unitarian Universalists. Rev. Theodore Parker supported violent resistance to slavery, being among the "Secret Six" who donated funds for John Brown to purchase weapons for his raid on Harper's Ferry, which ended in death for the combatants.



Study the painting at left, found by a UU visitor to the Palestinian town of Ramallah. What do you think it depicts?

The Arabic verse in the painting is from a poem by Mahmoud Darwish, the famous Palestinian nationalist poet, translated below:

“Oh you enemy of the sun
I will not compromise
And to the last pulse in my veins
I will resist”

The figure under the man’s left arm is the symbol of the right of return of refugees, and the candles likely stand for Palestinian lives lost. Above the man, the circle is probably the sun referenced in the verse, giving emphasis to a weapon that could be a slingshot or could be a Molotov cocktail weapon and suggesting that Palestinians and resistance to the occupation are of the sun, or on the side of life.

Similar artwork and photography on the Israeli side abounds. During the summer of 2014 attack on Gaza, a depiction was distributed of a young female figure symbolizing Palestine with her dress being lifted partially up representing a concept of rape. A photo circulating on the Internet purportedly showed an IDF member wearing a T-shirt after the 2015 Gaza assault that displayed the phrase “Deployed, Destroyed, Enjoyed.” On the other hand, to compare to an image of an Israeli child decorating a bomb for use on Gaza there is an image of a Palestinian child holding a gun.

Certainly there has been vastly disproportionate force used against Palestinians, and the fabric of their daily lives is riddled with rituals of restriction, humiliation, and oppression. How can the cycle of violence be ended? How do we stop the cycle? It is important to recognize the root cause, which is the original displacement of Palestinians, and its ongoing dispossession by Israel. Only solving this by ending the occupation and blockade will result in a just peace. The increasing poverty in Gaza will only result in people feeling more desperate and as if they have nothing to lose by resorting to military means. The American Friends Service Committee states that Israel needs to recognize “Palestinians’ right, not only to exist, but to be treated with dignity and equality.” The AFSC posits that the best way to prevent violence directed at Israel and the Jewish population is to end the occupation and end the near-total blockade of Gaza.

To promote the best possible reconciliations in the future, there are organizations such as the Gaza Community Mental Health Programme and the Gaza Mental Health Foundation working to help Palestinian victims of violence in preparation for future interactions. Israeli and Palestinian human rights groups are holding reconciliation congresses. As mentioned in the elaboration on the UU principle 6, the goal of world community, there is no guarantee that peace, liberty and justice will be obtained, but it can’t hurt to try to move in that direction. There are Jewish intellectuals and activists working to help build reconciliation and hope as well. Penny Rosenwasser’s book, *Jewish Women Choosing Justice Despite Our Fears*, is a good example of having hope despite fear and doubt.

As Rabbi Brian Walt says in a speech referenced and available at a link after this essay, “Why should Jewish lives be privileged above Palestinian lives?” Seeking and speaking truth, outlined in earlier principles, are an essential foundation in the journey toward just peace and community.

Read the blog post by Christian anti-racism/anti-oppression activist Ben Irwin on the Black Lives Matter movement, “Stop Praying for Peace in Baltimore,” at <http://benirwin.me/2015/05/01/stop-praying-for-peace-in-baltimore/>.

Listen to the audio file of the Inaugural Theodore Parker Lecture in December 2014 by Rabbi Brian Walt, “The Prophetic Challenge: Breaking Silence, Speaking Truth” at <http://www.tparkerchurch.org/2014/12/theodore-parker-lecture/>

13 Israeli and Palestinian groups building peace, Jen Marlowe for Yes! Magazine, September 10, 2014, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Making-a-difference/Change-Agent/2014/0910/13-Israeli-and-Palestinian-groups-building-peace>

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) website article: Will Israel Recognize the Palestinians’ right to exist? At <http://afsc.org/story/will-israel-recognize-palestinians%E2%80%99-right-exist>

FAQ – Right of Return: <http://www.badil.org/en/documents/category/30-materials-for-print?download=344%3Aprint-q-a>

Opening Reading – Elaboration on the 6th Principle

“The sixth Principle seems extravagant in its hopefulness and improbable in its prospects. Can we continue to say we want ‘world community’? ‘Peace, liberty, and justice for all’? The world is full of genocide, abuse, terror, and war. What have we gotten ourselves into?

“As naïve or impossible as the sixth Principle may seem, I’m not willing to give up on it. In the face of our culture’s apathy and fear, I want to imagine and help create a powerful vision of peace by peaceful means, liberty by liberatory means, justice by just means. I want us to believe—and to live as if we believe—that a world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all is possible. There is no guarantee that we will succeed, but I can assure you that we will improve ourselves and improve the world by trying.”

—Rev. Sean Parker Dennison, Tree of Life Congregation, McHenry, IL (read more from Sean in *The Seven Principles in Word and Worship*, ed. Ellen Brandenburg)

Grounding Questions and Discussion

1. Who are the UU visionaries and activists who, historically, have helped us see our way to new truths—liberatory, peaceful, just?
2. Discuss your knowledge of Margaret Fuller’s social radicalism, Theodore Parker’s abolitionism, Pete Seeger’s peace work, Olympia Brown/women’s suffrage and women in clergy, LGBTQ advocacy, Standing on the Side of Love for immigrants and against police brutality, Black Lives Matter.
3. How can we live *as if we believe* that this sixth principle can be realized, with regard to Israel-Palestine? What is the usefulness of doing so? Does dreaming create delusion or help to bring about change? How can we hold on to hope despite our fears about outcomes?

Activities

Discuss the Pre-reading. UU photographer and therapist Pat Westwater-Jong has used her philosophy and skills to document and share interfaith and cross-national relationships and projects in Israel-Palestine. Discuss reactions to the pre-reading article about Pat.

Learn About Palestinian “Gandhis.” Oppression can lead to retaliation. In the summer of 2014, Palestinian militants launched hundreds of rockets toward Israel, while Israel launched hundreds of drones and air strikes over the Gaza Strip. Some fear that if there is a Palestinian state with Hamas at the helm, Jewish lives will be threatened. And there is fear among some Palestinians that the ongoing occupation by a nuclear-armed Israel threatens their existence.

In this conflict, some Palestinians resort to violent methods, and some Jewish Israelis use violent methods. Terrorism is an often-used term to describe Palestinian violence; not all Palestinian violence can be defined as such. What would most people do if trapped in a place like the Gaza Strip with no way out, reduced standard of living, and repeated aerial and naval bombardment? We encourage you to contemplate and discuss the conditions that make nonviolent resistance more likely to succeed. Palestinians are vastly outpowered militarily and severely restricted in movement, economy and power. Nevertheless, the great majority of Palestinians carry on in peaceful or relatively peaceful manners to protest their disempowerment.

Unitarian Universalism is not a pacifist religion, and as a faith we have supported soldiering and military chaplains. Among the families of many UUs are people who participated as combatants in the American Revolution, the Civil War, World Wars I and II, and the Korean and Vietnam Wars as well as the military actions of the past several decades in Iraq and Afghanistan and elsewhere. Our beloved Rev. Theodore Parker donated money to a military action against slavery that was organized by John Brown. While nonviolent resistance is likely vastly preferred by most UUs with regards to the Israel-Palestine conflict, it is important to recognize that there are international principles on the right to self-defense. We may differ is what constitutes self-defense and in assigning accountability for the “cycle of violence” that occurs. One thing we may be able to agree on is that targeting civilian areas is unacceptable, and disproportionate use of force is also unacceptable. Fear should not prevent us from seeing Palestinians and Israelis in their humanity. There may be no guarantee that peace, liberty and justice will be obtained, but we must do our utmost to support movement in that direction.

There are organizations working tirelessly to help Palestinian victims of violence, torture and collective punishment to stay mentally healthy as much as possible, partly in preparation for future interactions, as mentioned in the elaboration of the principles above. And there are Jewish intellectuals and activists working to help build reconciliation and hope as well. Penny Rosenwasser’s book, *Jewish Women Choosing Justice Despite Our Fears* is a good example of having hope despite fear and doubt. The Palestinian Gandhi Project is an example of building hope and resiliency in the Palestinian population, which can support reconciliation and progress in the future.

View the video, *Caring for Gaza’s Kids*, by the Palestinian Gandhi Project, founded by Karen Batiyov and Pam Bailey, one example of creative nonviolent efforts for peace with justice. In this video, the director of the Gaza Community Mental Health Programme is interviewed. See more at <https://vimeo.com/channels/palestiniangandhiproject> and <http://palestinian-gandhi.tumblr.com/>.

Learn About Israeli Gandhis. The organization Bereaved Families in Israel works to build reconciliation between families of Israeli victims of terrorism and Palestinian families of those who perpetrated acts of terror. View the TED talk video presentation by a bereaved Israeli mother whose son was killed by a suicide bomber, “[Can I Reconcile with the Man Who Killed My Son?](http://youtu.be/faDSK_vVg_A)” (http://youtu.be/faDSK_vVg_A). Visit the website for Bereaved Families listed in the Resources section and read about the many activities this important group has conducted. Zochrot is an Israeli organization that is working on education and preparations for a future return of Palestinian refugees.

View the video of the Israeli teen, Natan Blanc, who was jailed more than 10 times for refusing to serve in the occupation army, at <http://www.wri-irg.org/node/21419>. View the [video of the support rally](http://972mag.com/watch-support-vigil-for-imprisoned-conscientious-objector-natan-blanc/71748/) (<http://972mag.com/watch-support-vigil-for-imprisoned-conscientious-objector-natan-blanc/71748/>).

Discussion. Share reactions to the readings, videos, and image above. What movements for liberation have contained a strong component of non-violence? Have any succeeded without violence? Consider the movement for American independence from Britain, the anti-slavery movement in the 1800s, the campaign for women’s suffrage, the U.S. civil

rights movement, movements to end colonialism abroad, the Vietnam conflict, the LGBTQ movement, and current conflicts across the Middle East. What evidence exists for the success of non-violent means of achieving justice on other issues or this one?

Call to Action Ideas. Learn more about Palestinian and Israeli non-violent resistance and protest via links from the current and previous sessions, and resources at the back of the guide. Consider making a donation to Just Vision, an organization that endeavors to document nonviolent protest actions, or to The Parents' Circle, promoting reconciliation, or to Zochrot or B'tselem, two human rights groups in Israel. Consider making a donation to Anera or the Gaza Mental Health Foundation, organizations that provide assistance to Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, or to Bethlehem's Lutheran Christmas Church, which runs an ecumenical educational center for all ages that provides job training as well as classes to keep cultural traditions alive such as embroidery and traditional music, or to Al Kamandjati ("violinist"), a music school that author Sandy Tolan, author of *The Lemon Tree*, wrote about in his recently published book, *Children of the Stone: The Power of Music in a Hard Land*. To learn more about Al Kamandjati visit <http://www.alkamandjati.com/en/home/>.

Closing

Each person in the group can share what they learned, found most notable, or a question that arose from the session.
