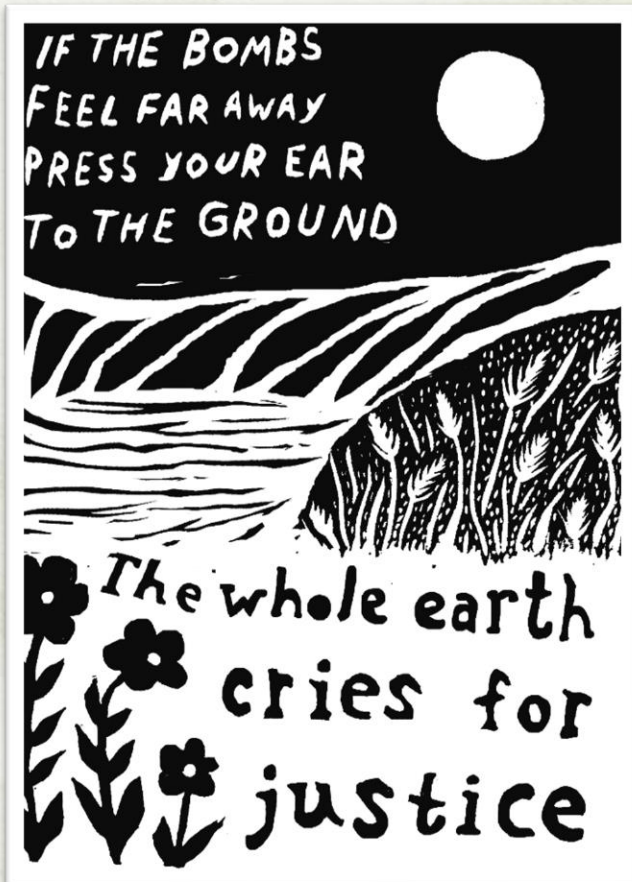


Gaza Ceasefire Pilgrimage: Community planning support for the Canadian Prairies and North, 2024

Prepared by Living Skies Regional Council of the United Church, with guidance from members of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan and grassroots people participating in the global Pilgrimage.



What is the pilgrimage?

This Lent and Spring 2024 a global movement is walking in prayerful solidarity with the people of Gaza, a tiny part of the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Pilgrims in 125 communities worldwide are mapping the 42 km of the Gaza strip onto their cities and communities with their bodies. You are invited to do this in your own community, no matter its size. Here's the [main website for the global movement](#).

So often the long struggle for a just peace in Palestine and Israel can easily seem very far away. But, as with the Indigenous lands we live on anywhere in Canada, communities of all sizes and backgrounds in Palestine and Israel live with the impacts of violence. Communities of all sizes and backgrounds here in Canada need to be part of the response.

Palestinians in particular have been systematically stripped of access to their lands, including in Gaza. Their land-based rituals, and farming and fishing skills, have been deliberately blocked, to the point that the majority now live in deep poverty. Here at

home, many who live on reserves or in rural areas may have an especially deep understanding of the struggles facing Palestinian villages and agricultural communities. Your participation is important. Your actions and witness are important. (Image: Lane Lloyd, www.coyotesnout.com)

Movement through your community

The destruction and death in Gaza are immense, and we can choose to reflect on this right in our own communities, alongside words, songs, and silence that invite grief, solidarity, and re-commitment to Christian love and solidarity. The suggested route of 42 km, the length of the Gaza Strip, can be re-created in many ways in your community and in surrounding areas.

Health, education, and religious buildings have all been targeted. Homes have been bombed flat, deliberately demolished or set afire, or looted. Water, which was already in short supply and very contaminated, is desperately short. Farm land is in very short supply in this crowded territory, and what remains is close to the fence with Israel, which puts farmers at high risk of being shot; the same is true

for the fishers who try to catch a bit of food from the beautiful blue Mediterranean. Both humans and the Earth are groaning under the terrible impacts of war.

We can well imagine similar impacts in our communities when we take time to reflect on this. Your walk could visit vital community services and spaces, and hold space for reflecting on the impacts of violence and destruction, and our profound human need for peace and justice.

What about politics?

This pilgrimage calls for a ceasefire. That's one of its main purposes. As of March 2024, the Canadian government finally agreed to support a full and lasting ceasefire. Immediate humanitarian aid, the release of all Israeli and Palestinian captives, an immediate ceasing of Canadian military sales to Israel, and an end to the military occupation are other concerns many are naming.

These are profound human needs. While not easy topics to discuss, the pilgrimage asks us to name the realities that are causing immense suffering and trauma. Without truth, there cannot be eventual reconciliation. That includes naming the reality that Canada's actions and policies over the years have often not contributed to the hope for a just peace. Our words and actions can support the Israelis and Palestinians who are committed to a just peace, and stay committed to non violence despite the odds.

Timing

A pilgrimage can take place whenever you wish. Because Prairies and North weather are often a major factor through much of the year, you could plan on pilgrimages through the spring and right through the fall. Even if a lasting ceasefire is achieved, the impacts of this war and genocide will continue to be felt for decades. Prayer, lament, reflection, and advocacy will be needed over the long term.

Respecting the land, and supporting grief and trauma

Please ensure you include a land acknowledgment, and connect with local Indigenous people if you can. Be mindful that your community may well include people who have survived war or other forms of violence themselves, so think carefully about the balance between naming the realities of war and the needs of those affected by it. If possible, have at least one clearly identified chaplain. Have other marshals who can assist anyone struggling to walk or roll, or other concerns. If possible, gather for coffee or a meal and conversation after the walk, and offer some space for talking through participants' emotions and questions.

Using your community resources

Art. Song. Poetry. Stories. Commitment to really listening to each other. Respectful agreement and disagreement. Commitments to learn more together. Commitments to speak to government.

Liturgical resources

[Ongoing collection of prayers and songs](#) by the Ceasefire Pilgrimage in Australia

[Gaza Pilgrimage Way of the Cross, Maryknoll Sisters](#)

[Liturgical resource from Australia](#)

Church links about Palestine and Israel

[United Church Gaza Ceasefire Pilgrimage page](#) (info, action, church leaders' action May 2024)

[KAIROS Gaza Ceasefire Pilgrimage](#)

[Mennonite Central Committee Canada: Gaza page and letter writing](#)

