



Suggestions for Planning a Peace Vigil: Join us in Prayer for an End to War in Palestine & Israel

In response to the Hama attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, and Israel's military onslaught on Gaza, Canadian Friends of Sabeel encourages communities and congregations to engage in public witness against war and violence. We have prepared this resource to assist in the planning of a public witness peace vigil.

WHAT?

There are various options for the structure of the vigil:

- Gathering inside in a church space.
- Gathering inside in a community space.
- Gathering outside in a public space.
- Organizing a walk in your neighbourhood or in a central space in your city or town.
- Consider how to employ silence in your vigil. Complete or partial silence can be inclusive and meaningful and provide a refuge from the noise of news reports and contentious conversations.

WHY?

Communicate the reason you're inviting people to join for the vigil. For example:

- Praying together for peace.
- Praying for an end to violence.
- Lamenting and grieving.
- Making space for empathy for the suffering of everyone.

How?

- Have a banner backdrop, poster or projected image that indicates why you are gathering: "Praying for Peace," etc.
- Invite people to bring candles.
- Invite people to wear black as a sign of grief.
- Ask people to leave out flags, signs, banners or chants.
- Protect the silence by being clear in all communications.

- Protect the aim of your vigil by planning for what to do and who will take action if others join and disrupt your intention. For example, you may designate one or two people to approach disruptors to ask them to be respectful, join in with your program, or to leave.
- Consider including music. Be thoughtful about your selection. It is important that the music reflects the inclusive and peace-focused values of the vigil. Instrumental music is often a good choice. Suggestions for songs with lyrics are below.
- Consider including images. Be thoughtful about your selection. It is important that it reflects the inclusive and peace focused values of the vigil. Images that portray what you are striving for can be a good choice, for example smiling children. Avoid images that portray violence or inflicted suffering.

WHO?

- Invite members of your community or congregation through announcements at services, personal emails and website or private social media posts.
- Follow-up with personal communications through email or phone texts and calls: “Will you be joining us?”
- Plan the event for who you expect to be there: adults only, families, youth?
- Invite neighbouring churches or faith communities, especially those with whom you have established collaboration or cooperation and social justice or peace groups.
- Be cautious about inviting publicly with Facebook posts or posters in public spaces.

WHERE?

Choose a place that you have easy access to and feel comfortable in. Consider the following:

- Is your primary purpose prayer and grieving? Perhaps inside your worship space, in an attached hall or outside the building.
- Do you wish to also be a public witness? Choose a more public place where you will be seen. Perhaps a public gathering spot for peace like a peace garden or monument to peace.
- Be cautious about choosing a location that is traditionally associated with fractious or polarized relationships, for example outside a consulate.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Be aware of other things that are already happening in your community and plan or do outreach accordingly.
- Will you make this a regular occurrence, for example every Saturday afternoon or once a month on a Sunday afternoon? Returning to the same place week after week can be a powerful witness to continued solidarity, though it requires a heavy commitment for organizing. If you do choose to make this a recurring event, make sure you communicate that to participants. Ask them to spread the word.
- Even if it is a one-time event, extend the impact by sharing photos and personal accounts in your church or community bulletin or on its social media or through email lists. You may want to contact your local press.
- Attach your vigil to another event in your church or community, for example before or after Sunday service, as part of a youth group gathering or community supper, etc.
- Reach out to other groups who are working on peace and justice issues; think inter-sectionally.

- Hold a post-vigil gathering with your organizing group to evaluate how it went and imagine what you could do next.

RESOURCES

Remember to ask permission and/or give appropriate credit if using copyrighted material or music.

Tools & resources to include in your vigil:

A. Songs:

<https://www.worldmaking.net/items-8/your-people-lament>

B. Prayers:

Sabeel Wave of Prayer (weekly): <https://sabeel.org/category/wave-of-prayers/>

Canadian Friends of Sabeel collection: [insert weblink]

Mennonite Church Canada Palestine-Israel Network:

<https://www.mennonitechurch.ca/article/16090-prayers-of-lament-and-intercession-for-palestine-and-israel>

Mennonite Central Committee: <https://mcc.org/resources/prayer-palestine-and-israel>

C. Posters from other vigils:

Walk with Grief – Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario



Silent Candlelight Vigil for Gaza – Montreal



CANADIAN
FRIENDS
OF SABEEL

Join us for a family-friendly
**Silent Candlelight Vigil
for Gaza**

Sunday November 19
from 4 to 5 pm

Place du Canada park
corner de la Cathédrale & René Lévesque

Canadian Friends of Sabeel is a national ecumenical response to the call of Palestinian Christians for solidarity. Through education and engagement, we support the struggle for equality in justice, freedom, and human rights of Palestinians living under apartheid and the illegal Israeli military occupation. With partners around the world, we work non-violently for a just and durable peace for Palestinians and Israelis.

www.friendsofsabeel.ca

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