

Presbyterian Supplement  
Open Doors, Open Minds :  
Synagogues and Churches  
Studying Together



**Warning: Advance preparation  
needed. Read ahead.**

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This resource is a supplement to accompany *Open Doors, Open Minds: Synagogues and Churches Studying Together: A Guide for Jewish-Christian Dialogue*, prepared jointly by the Commission on Interreligious Affairs of Reform Judaism and the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism (copies available on the web at <<http://urj.org>>; click Resources, then click the Conversion / Interfaith heading and the Open Doors, Open Minds heading).

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## A NOTE TO PRESBYTERIANS

Christians and Jews are supported in our daily living by the worship and study in our congregations. Conversations between Jews and Christians may best take place in just such an environment, so close to the place where we are personally engaged. The Commission on Interreligious Affairs of Reform Judaism and the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism have offered a study / dialogue guide, *Open Doors, Open Minds*, that is intended for use in these congregational settings. The study offers sessions for getting acquainted and for talking about living as Christians and Jews, as well as for talking about issues related to Israel and Israeli-Palestinian peace. The video that is suggested for use with some of the sessions can also be helpful in setting a tone and getting conversation going.

In November 2003, when the Reform Jewish community first launched the project that has resulted in publication of *Open Doors, Open Minds*, Stated Clerk Cliff Kirkpatrick wrote a letter welcoming the initiative. He said:

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) gives thanks for the vitality of the Reform Jewish community in the United States and is grateful for the many opportunities we have had over the years to be partners in efforts to build mutual understanding and to address issues of social concern.

As our *Theological Understanding of the Relationship between Christians and Jews* (1987) makes clear, the church's identity is intimately related to the continuing identity of the Jewish people. For this reason, Presbyterians engage in dialogue with Jewish partners and joyfully participate in educational programs designed to foster understanding and improve relations between us. We also look for opportunities for service and mission to meet human needs and to address issues of peace and justice, acting in shared hope of God's reign on earth.

It is a pleasure to look forward to yet another opportunity for Presbyterians and Jews to study and work together. We remember the creative work of the PC(USA) and the [Union of American Hebrew Congregations] in making available the earlier study materials, *Thinking and Working Together: Study and Action Suggestions for Jewish and Christian Congregations*, in 1993. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) welcomes the new study process now being initiated by Rabbi Eric Yoffie and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations [now known as the Union for Reform Judaism].

We hope that Presbyterians will find study with their Jewish neighbors a positive way to continue to build relationships of respect and understanding, for the mutual pursuit of justice and the healing of creation.

Jay T. Rock  
Coordinator, Interfaith Relations  
September 2004

P.S. A note to your Jewish partners comes next in this material. We encourage you to share it with them.

## A NOTE TO JEWISH PLANNERS WHO WILL DIALOGUE AND STUDY WITH PRESBYTERIAN CHRISTIANS

This note, found in the *Presbyterian Supplement to Open Doors, Open Minds*, comes with our greetings, in a spirit of dialogue. We trust that you will help your Presbyterian partners to use the *Supplement*. And we pray that God will bless the time that you and Presbyterian Christians will spend together.

In 1987, a study / reflection paper of our church, *A Theological Understanding of the Relationship between Christians and Jews*, said:

Both Christians and Jews are called to wait and to hope in God. While we wait, [we] are called to the service of God in the world. . . . [T]he service of each shares [in common] at least these elements: a striving to realize the word of the prophets, an attempt to remain sensitive to the dimension of the holy, an effort to encourage the life of the mind, and a ceaseless activity in the cause of justice and peace. . . . These are far more than the requirements of our common humanity. . . . Christians and Jews are obligated to act together in these things. . . . By doing so, we believe that God is glorified.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is committed to remaining in communication with the Jewish community, both in times when relationships are easy and in times when they are difficult.

This *Supplement* is motivated by several things:

- w** We want to encourage human interactions and therefore offer suggestions for processes that will support these.
- w** We trust that good processes for personal interaction can encourage listening that enables people to feel empathy for one another.
- w** We would like Presbyterians to meet the guidance that comes from our church's documents addressed to its own members and congregations. These are a more faithful representation of who we are, we believe, than are the more general, somewhat stereotypical descriptions of Christians in *Open Doors, Open Minds*.
- w** We believe we should raise some of the issues we see at the core of our relationships, in the hope that constructive awareness of these may be useful. We realize that we will not agree, even on what these problematics are, because we come from differing traditions.
- w** We know ourselves to be part of the world Church and, in our relations with you, trust that we can grow in ways that help us to be a faithful part of that Body worldwide.

We believe that God's Spirit is present when we act in openness and honesty with others. May God be with us in these days.

Jay T. Rock  
Coordinator, Interfaith Relations  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

September 2004

# Presbyterian Supplement to Open Doors, Open Minds : Synagogues and Churches Studying Together A Guide for Jewish-Christian Dialogue

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## INTRODUCTION

In its simplest form, dialogue is listening and speaking, giving and receiving in full two-way communication. We experience the profundity of two-way communication in the depth of prayer and in our most intimate human relationships. This experience is something we can seek, as well, as we engage in efforts toward reconciliation with all those around us (see II Corinthians 5:18).

As Presbyterian Christians in a congregation seek dialogue with a local Jewish synagogue, it is important to remember that dialogue doesn't just happen without effort. One of the components necessary to make dialogue happen is equal participation. This can begin with advance planning that includes members of each community involved. This *Presbyterian Supplement* has been prepared to help you in this process.

**w** Local Presbyterian planners will find suggestions about each session outlined in *Open Doors, Open Minds*. Use it to help you be good participants in joint Jewish-Christian planning. Read it ahead, starting with the Introduction.

**w** All Presbyterian participants in the study / dialogue will need some of the additional materials found in this *Presbyterian Supplement*. They will give a Presbyterian Christian perspective that can be shared with Jewish neighbors. The homework suggestions before each session will guide you toward being well prepared.

**w** It is strongly recommended that this opportunity for joint study and conversation *not* be used as an occasion to debate the merits of the actions of the PC(USA) 216th General Assembly (2004). Any discussion of these actions – whether on an individual basis or in a group – can best follow exploration of the more fundamental issues raised in *Open Doors, Open Minds* and this *Presbyterian Supplement*. Any group wanting to have a later exploration of the actions of the 216th General Assembly can find materials at the web site <[www.pcusa.org/israelandjewishrelations](http://www.pcusa.org/israelandjewishrelations)>. Do not enter further discussion without getting these materials, since there is much misinformation in circulation that could lead to debate based on inadequate information.

Only the planners, facilitators, minister, and rabbi need the full *Presbyterian Supplement*. Photocopy the parts you want to give to any other members of your Jewish-Christian study / dialogue group.

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[Hereafter, this *Presbyterian Supplement* will be referred to as the *Supplement* and *Open Doors, Open Minds* will be described as the *Guide*.]

## WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN PLANNING?

A planning group may be as few as two people or as many as six or eight, if necessary. An ideal planning group would have equal numbers of Jews and Christians. Be sure there is lay leadership in your planning group. The *Guide* is intended for use primarily by lay persons. Participation of a minister and rabbi, however, may be important support. Choose planners who have skills in cooperation. One of your planners (the pastor or someone else) should have good biblical and theological knowledge.

## WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THE DIALOGUE SESSIONS?

**Group size and composition.** Create a study / dialogue group that has about equal numbers of Jews and Christians. Watch the number of men and women so that there is some similarity between the gender balance of the two communities. What other differences in your communities need to be represented?

An ideal group would be small enough to allow for full interchange among all its members but large enough to give a variety of voices. Alternately, a larger group may gather for general presentation of material at each session, then break into several smaller circles for discussion time.

Ask members to make a commitment to attend all group sessions and to do study in advance.

**Qualities for participation.** As we dialogue, we remember God's call to love our neighbor, and we recognize that God has created us all in God's own image. Therefore, participants should be committed to practicing "respectful presence," being:

**w** fully attentive to others in the group

**w** respectful of the integrity of each person in the group

**w** ready to recognize others' commitments and values

**w** ready to express their own faith in humility, honesty, and openness

**w** able to examine themselves to avoid any hint of manipulation or coercion of others

[cf. *Respectful Presence: An Understanding of Interfaith Prayer and Celebration from a Reformed Christian Perspective*, commended to congregations and governing bodies by the PC(USA) 209th General Assembly (1997)]

Speak to Presbyterian participants in advance to encourage them to assist each other in being respectful.

**Goals of participation.** As we dialogue, we are open to the surprises that come when God's Spirit leads us to new understandings and new behaviors as a result of being in the presence of one another. We discover who we are, what we think, and how we act as we meet ourselves in dialogue with others. The following general goals emphasize what is possible:

**w** We will share together in ways that lead Christians and Jews to know one another better and to have empathetic understanding of each other, without requiring agreement.

**w** We will provide an opportunity for our group or some of its members to discover new ways Jews and Christians may work together for justice, peace, and the care of God's creation.

Participants should come to study / dialogue unconditionally, without basing their willingness to participate upon their ability to change others' commitments or views.



## WHAT DOES THE PLANNING GROUP NEED TO DECIDE?

Planners should read through the entire *Guide*. Many of the decisions the planning group must make can be handled rather quickly. A checklist of some very practical matters will help your group think about its opening tasks:

T Size and makeup of your group (How will members be recruited in the synagogue? In the church? How will you help members know about the personal qualities and standards for participation?)

T Location for meetings (Assuming participants will feel most equal if both a Jewish and a Christian location are used in some alternating way, is there any compelling reason for doing otherwise and using a single location? Will the formality of church and synagogue buildings or the comfort of homes be best?)

T Time of meetings (How far apart should meetings be spaced? When are all members free to come? How long will meetings be? Will they include a time for hospitality and refreshments?)

T Lay facilitators (Who will lead the sessions? Who has the skills to do this and will be respected by the group for this role? Can you find an equal number of Jews and Christians for this? [See comments on the choice in the *Guide*, page 4.]

T Number of sessions (Will the group follow the number proposed in the *Guide* or are there other important considerations? How long will you be able to hold the loyal attendance of all your participants?)

T Sessions from the *Guide* you will eliminate or combine, if you are cutting the total number of sessions (See suggestions on page 10 of this *Supplement*.)

T Content of sessions (Who will decide what can be accomplished in any given session? Will you use the video? Who will preview it? If you cannot use the video, will you use parts of its script as readings?)

T Room arrangement (Will a circle be the most feasible arrangement for participants to see each other and interact? If not, what other arrangement will make it possible for participants to meet each other in an atmosphere of congeniality and candor?)

T Refreshments and hospitality (How will you explain to one another whatever dietary restrictions are followed by participants? Have you considered both the requirements of religious observance and each congregation's ethos concerning such matters as alcoholic beverages? Can you model comfortable hospitality sufficiently to encourage participants to invite one another to social occasions even outside your group meeting times?)

T Visits to worship (Do you want to invite one another to formal worship during or after the period when you are having meetings? Can you do this in both directions? What will be required? How will you put people at ease? How will you explain what is happening?)

T Evaluation (How will you get evaluation from the group after each session, so that the facilitators and planning group will have ideas about how things are going? [You might

ask for quick written responses to the questions: ‘What did you find most useful in the session?’ ‘What would you have changed?’ Alternately, can you consult certain individuals who are representative of the thinking in the group?] How will you prepare the final evaluation form on page 52 of the *Guide*?)

### HOW CAN WE CUSTOMIZE PLANS TO FIT OUR INTERESTS AND AVAILABLE TIME?

The *Guide* is best used as a whole. It does allow, however, for selective use of only some of its parts. Possible programs include:

<i>Program Emphasis</i>	<i>Sessions in Guide to be used *</i>
<b>A</b> Use of full <i>Guide</i>	1 – 6 (for 4-6 meetings)
<b>B</b> Emphasis on getting acquainted	1, 2, 3a (for 2 or 3 meetings)
<b>C1</b> Emphasis on scripture and the Ten Commandments	1, 2, 3, 4 (for 4 meetings)
<b>C2</b> Emphasis on the Ten Commandments	3b, 4 (for 2 or more meetings)
<b>D</b> Emphasis on Israel	1, 2, 3a, 5, 6 (for 4 or 5 meetings)

\*In addition, in each case, use at least part of Session 7, as a final meeting or as a component in whatever other Session you will use as your last meeting.

### HOW SHOULD ADVANCE STUDY FOR PARTICIPANTS BE PLANNED?

Presbyterian participants will need to set aside an hour or more before each session for personal homework – reading church documents, clarifying personal thoughts in order to be able to speak them, perhaps obtaining information.

Additionally, if preparation may best be done in a group, plan one or more “homework for Christians” gatherings. Tell your Jewish neighbors what Presbyterians are doing to prepare themselves. Let them know you would be happy if they planned “homework for Jews” gatherings, should they feel the need.

Make it a practice to offer your Jewish partners any paper that is in the hands of all Christians and is quoted, or referred to, in the dialogue / study sessions. This will promote the equality so important in dialogue.

**Reading suggested documents.** Distribute papers well ahead. Some of these are attached to this *Supplement* for copying; others may require separate downloading from the web or ordering in hard copy from their source.

**Previewing the video.** Obtain the video, *Walking God’s Paths*, soon enough to do advance screening. Notice any unfamiliar Christian practices, teachings, or history that may need explanation. Encourage Presbyterian reflection on any particularly challenging Christian theological questions raised by the video’s presentations. Hold a “homework for Christians” gathering if you believe a group discussion among Presbyterians would be important.

## WHAT GROUND RULES SHOULD PLANNERS PRESENT TO ALL PARTICIPANTS ?

**w** See “Some Principles for Interreligious Dialogue” [in the *Guide*, page 5] for a checklist of behaviors that should be followed by all.

**w** In addition, follow the very useful “Guidelines for Discussing the Middle East: Assistance for Christians and Jews in Dialogue” (from *Thinking and Working Together: Study and Action Suggestions for Jewish and Christian Congregations*, page 16 [prepared by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and the National Council of Churches, 1993] used with permission).

- 1** Keep in mind the original agreement about the basis for your discussion or dialogue. If you have agreed on a particular purpose, do not allow a small group, an individual, or people of only one of the two faith communities to redirect discussion to a different purpose without prior agreement of the whole group. For example, if you planned to talk about Jewish and Christian spirituality, do not begin discussion of the political situation in the Middle East without a conscious group decision to do so.
- 2** If you decide to have a serious discussion about the Middle East, make available useful materials for the whole group. For a small packet of materials . . . refer to the office in your denomination that facilitates your work in interfaith relations. . . .
- 3** Do not expect agreement. Christians and Jews have different theological traditions, community membership, histories, and expectations about the Middle East. Work toward greater agreement, as possible. Place emphasis on peace and justice and self-identity of all parties before you begin to speak prematurely about “reconciliation.”
- 4** Pledge to maintain an atmosphere of trust and respect in which discussion will be open and honest. Maintain styles of speaking that demonstrate respect. Do not ask questions or make statements in a way that intimidates others or makes them feel they are being judged. Express judgments toward ideas but not persons.
- 5** Agree that you will not use statements made in trustful, respectful discussion to speak harshly or take action against others after your meetings are finished.
- 6** Study information from various positions. In addition to sharing facts, talk about personal experiences. Respect experiences of one another as having integrity.
- 7** At times of disagreement, state what you have heard being said by the previous speaker who has expressed a different viewpoint before you respond with your own ideas. Do not proceed until the previous speaker has agreed that your re-statement reflects his / her statement accurately. Wait for clarification, if necessary.
- 8** Indicate points of agreement before beginning to describe points of disagreement with those who have spoken earlier.
- 9** It will be more valuable to clarify your concerns, experiences, and convictions than to attempt to persuade others to your particular viewpoint. Seek the same clarity from your dialogue partners.

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## OUR HISTORY, OUR PRESENT

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### PRESBYTERIAN HOMEWORK FOR SESSION ONE

At least two weeks before the opening meeting, give each Presbyterian participant both the document and study guide of *A Theological Understanding of the Relationship between Christians and Jews* [adopted by the 199th PC(USA) General Assembly (1987) for study / reflection and circulated as a “provisional understanding”]. Ask them to read the full document, giving attention to how the paper was prepared, what its status is in the church, and what it contains. Suggest that they read all biblical references in the paper, as well.

Ask participants to turn in a list of any statements or vocabulary they cannot understand (*not* an indication of agreement or disagreement with the paper). Find a way to address questions before the first meeting. It may be necessary to learn the special vocabulary of Jewish-Christian relations, for example:

**W** Supersession: the concept that the Christian church has replaced Israel as the covenant people and the chosen object of God's promises [See Affirmation and Explication 2, *A Theological Understanding* . . . ]

**W** Engraftment: the concept that the church is included in God's covenant promise by being grafted as a branch onto the living root / tree of God's chosen people, Israel (cf. Romans ch. 11) [See Affirmation and Explication 2, *A Theological Understanding* . . . ]

**W** Teaching of contempt: the elevation of Christians and demonization of Jews through negative stereotyping and harsh condemnations, often misusing theological concepts or readings of scripture [See Affirmation and Explication 5, *A Theological Understanding* . . . ]

### PREPARING FOR SESSION ONE

Depending on your plans:

- W** Preview the video (or arrange a well-planned reading of the script).
- W** Write the “What to Look For” outline on a flip chart or board.
- W** Prepare the materials to distribute as homework for Session Two.

### MEETING FOR SESSION ONE

#### I. Introductions

#### II. The Role of Study

Be sure to use these sections, even if you are planning fewer meetings or think you are already acquainted with one another.

#### III. “Walking God's Paths” Video

If there is time, seeing the entire second segment, “Shared Origins, Diverse Roads,” would be useful, particularly since it deals with a history that Jewish readers of *A Theological Understanding of the Relationships between Christians and Jews* have told Presbyterians is too little reflected in the document and, therefore, in our consciousness.

The facilitator may provide guidance by writing some cues for viewing on a flip chart or board before the viewing, then using these as the outline for follow-up discussion:

***What to Look For***

- Diversity in the Jewish community of the 2nd Temple period
- Likenesses and differences between Jesus and other Jews
- Jesus' killing from a public political perspective
- Separation of Jews and Christians and accounts of Jesus' death
- Different ways to understand "access to God"

Discussion after the video can be a good beginning dialogue. Christians may want to ask Jews what "redemption" means to them or about the meaning of the practice of religious law in the life of individual Jews.

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## METAPHORS, IMAGES, AND STEREOTYPES

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### PRESBYTERIAN HOMEWORK FOR SESSION TWO

You may distribute the sheets, “Jews in Presbyterian Confessions” [in Appendix A to this *Supplement*], to some or all Presbyterians. While there is no suggested reporting opportunity in the session for this advance reading, members should find they are better prepared for discussion.

If you decide to ask someone to reflect on the readings on page 15 below, make an assignment.

### PREPARING FOR SESSION TWO

Depending on your plans:

- W Make copies of the two texts in the *Guide* (see note concerning II.B, C).
- W Preview the video (or arrange a well-planned reading of the script).
- W Get a Post-it pad and straight pins for the exercise in II. B below; make a small instruction poster; post a definition of “stereotype” on it (see “Jews in Presbyterian Confessions”).
- W Prepare the materials to distribute as homework for Session Three.

### MEETING FOR SESSION TWO

To get to know each other on a personal basis, suggest reordering the elements of the session to allow an interactive beginning using questions from the *Guide*:

#### II. B The Power of Personal History

Assign a person to greet participants at the door with the written instruction:

- 1 Take two Post-it sheets. Write on them about Christians if you are a Jew or about Jews if you are a Christian.
- 2 On one, write one thing you admire.
- 3 On the other, write one stereotype you have had now or in the past.
- 4 Put the Post-its on your back, then circulate the room for conversation about what each has written.

Have the greeter stick the Post-it sheets on participants’ backs, or use straight pins.

After a brief interval, the facilitator may gather the group together to discuss briefly the questions:

- W Have stereotypes stood between us and good friendships?
- W Of what other old stereotypes are you aware that you did not see on anyone’s back today?

(This exercise may be skipped if you are compressing sessions into fewer meetings, but do not leave this out if you are seriously working on relationships.)

#### I. “Walking God’s Paths” Video

Show all or part of video segment 5 on “Metaphors for a Unique Relationship.”

Some prior Presbyterian gathering of information might enliven the discussion that follows.

**W** Re the relation between Christian triumphalism and the concept of the “church triumphant” in Christian theology. Consider how the theology of the confessions might move to an exclusivism that seeks to prevail over others in unhealthy ways:

*From the Second Helvetic Confession, Chapter XVII:*

PARTS OR FORMS OF THE CHURCH. The Church is divided into different parts or forms; not because it is divided or rent asunder in itself, but rather because it is distinguished by the diversity of the numbers that are in it. MILITANT AND TRIUMPHANT. For the one is called the Church Militant, the other the Church Triumphant. The former still wages war on earth, and fights against the flesh, the world, and the prince of this world, the devil; against sin and death. But the latter, having been now discharged, triumphs in heaven immediately after having overcome all those things and rejoices before the Lord. Notwithstanding both have fellowship and union one with another.

*From the Scots Confession, Chapter XVI:*

Out[side] of this Kirk there is neither life nor eternal felicity. Therefore we utterly abhor the blasphemy of those who hold that men who live according to equity and justice will be saved, no matter what religion they profess. . . . [T]here is neither life nor salvation without Jesus Christ. . . . [The] Kirk is invisible, known only to God, who alone knows whom he has chosen, and includes both the chosen who are departed, the Kirk triumphant, those who yet live and fight against sin and Satan, and those who shall live hereafter.

*Note Zechariah 9:9-10 (New Revised Standard Version) as it can be read in Christian interpretation:*

Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. He will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall command peace to the nations; his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.

**W** Re “partners in waiting” from a Christian perspective. See *A Theological Understanding of the Relationship between Christians and Jews*, Affirmation and Explication 7.

## **II. B,C Discussion and Analysis**

Among the proposed questions, preference might go to the final question in C: “Which metaphor for the relationship of Christians and Jews is most appropriate?”

If there is not time to cover the two readings included in the session, one or both could be copied for later personal reading.

## **III. Conclusion**

Save time in the meeting plan for these questions, even if they are handled very briefly.

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## ENCOUNTERING THE TEXT: TOOLS FOR UNDERSTANDING

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### PRESBYTERIAN HOMEWORK FOR SESSION THREE

Distribute to Presbyterians copies of *Israel in the Theology of Calvin—Towards a New Approach to the Old Testament and Judaism* by Hans-Joachim Kraus [PC(USA) Occasional Paper available from the Office of Interfaith Relations]. Ask them to prepare for discussion about scripture by considering:

- W What concepts of Calvin, as described by Kraus, would help us develop positive relationships with Jews?
- W What concepts might remain stumbling blocks?
- W Do Calvin's concepts conform to what you were taught about scripture and the Jews?

Participants who want to read further might also read all or part of *The Nature of Revelation in the Christian Tradition from a Reformed Perspective* [commended for study by the PC(USA) 199th General Assembly (1989) for its discussion of present understandings].

### PREPARING FOR SESSION THREE

Depending on your plans:

- W Preview the video (or arrange a well-prepared reading of the script).
- W Assign the readings in the *Guide* to various participants for reading in the meeting.
- W Collect a variety of Bible translations and the original Hebrew text.
- W Copy the chart in the *Guide* on the numbering systems for the Ten Commandments.
- W Prepare the materials to distribute as homework for Session Four.

### MEETING FOR SESSION THREE

#### I. A, B Approaching the Biblical text

Use the initial readings that describe the general problem faced by Jews and Christians in reading scripture. Beyond this, you may add or substitute material that would put the Christian interpretation of the Hebrew scriptures and Jews within a larger context:

The authority of the Scriptures, and the uniqueness of the biblical writers, are derived from the centrality of the Word made flesh in the process of revelation. Jesus Christ is the supreme revelation of God, but he reveals God in a context, and that context is constituted in part by other divine revelatory activity. Jesus comes to a people that remembers historic events and prophetic words in which God's gracious love and judgment, the divine compassion and zeal for justice, have been revealed to them—a people that has learned in prayer and psalm and sacred liturgy to acknowledge the majesty and generosity of God. All of this (and therefore the old Testament) belongs to the Christian revelation. And God's act of self-revelation is completed by its reception. . . . The writings of the New Testament are the authentic record of apostolic testimony and of what the apostolic Church understood to have been communicated to it. The canonical New Testament as the Church has accepted it, as a whole, comes as close as we can reasonably expect to the way Jesus was seen by the first generation of those who understood him. It also contains their irreplaceable testimony to his resurrection. No later writings or teachings, however, inspired, can stand in these



relations to the revelation of God in Jesus. Because the revelation in Jesus is the standard by which Christians must test all other claims and appearances of inspiration, the Holy Scriptures have a uniquely authoritative role.  
[*The Nature of Revelation in the Christian Tradition from a Reformed Perspective*, (PCUSA 199th General Assembly, 1987, commended for study), Section V. B.]

Expectation of hearing the voice of God through the Bible calls for a serious and disciplined attention to the letter of Scripture. Careful interpretation must begin with study of the “plain sense” of each text, though it must also go on to relate that sense to the Bible as a whole, to the history of the people of God as we understand it from the Scriptures and from other evidence, and to issues of systematic theology and present-day application. The plain sense is what the normal reader at the time of writing, or of final formation of the text, would have understood the passage to mean. This is comprehended largely through grammatical and other linguistic knowledge, and partly through historical-critical study. . . .

Closely linked today . . . are the methods of historical criticism . . . By bringing to light new alternatives for interpretation, and a new wealth of meanings rooted in the original historical context, they have both complicated the interpreter’s context and enriched it with new possibilities. . . .  
Openness to the Spirit in the interpretation of Scripture precludes a clear-cut method for the resolution of controversies. The idea of a method by which agreement can be coerced, typically by rational argument from authoritative sources, is perennially seductive. . . .

At the same time there must be . . . a check on subjective and arbitrary interpretation of Scripture. This is provided, first and foremost, and ultimately through the Scriptures themselves, by what has been called “the rule of faith,” which might also be referred to simply as “the Gospel.” These terms refer to the core of God’s message to us in Jesus Christ. It is communicated in propositions or statements and expressed by various summaries of the faith that are found in the New Testament and the creeds of the Church. But it is not identified with any list of propositions. . . . All Christians are called to attain [an understanding of this “rule of faith”], and acceptable interpretations of what God is saying to us in and through the Scriptures must be found in agreement with it. At the same time we must always be open to the possibility that our understandings of the Gospel should be corrected in the light of a new interpretation.  
[*The Nature of Revelation in the Christian Tradition from a Reformed Perspective*, (PCUSA 199th General Assembly, 1987, commended for study), Section VII.A, B.]

## I. C “Walking God’s Paths” Video

Show all or part of video segment 3 on “Common Texts, Different Scriptures.” This will give many Presbyterians some strikingly new insights into the samenesses and differences of Jews and Christians. It may be material requiring time to digest. Plan accordingly and choose carefully which questions will best help promote real dialogue.

**w** Those Presbyterians who have reflected on the homework reading(s) may have special contributions to offer in question 2.b.

**w** Question 2.c. asks a question about a Catholic document that has no authority for Presbyterians but that offers important insights, especially in relation to the statement in the video that most of what Christians believe about God is simply Jewish tradition.

22. . . . Should not Christians henceforth read the Bible as Jews do, in order to show proper respect for its Jewish origins? . . . [A] negative response must be given . . . For to read the Bible as Judaism does necessarily involve an implicit acceptance of all its presuppositions, that is, the full acceptance of what Judaism is, in particular, the authority of its writings and rabbinic traditions, which exclude faith in Jesus as Messiah and Son of God. . . . Christians can and ought to admit that the Jewish reading of the Bible is a possible one, in continuity with the Jewish Sacred Scriptures from the Second Temple period, a reading analogous to the Christian reading which developed in parallel fashion. Both readings are bound up with the vision of their respective faiths, of which the readings are the result and expression. Consequently, both are irreducible. On the practical level of exegesis, Christians can, nonetheless, learn much from Jewish exegesis practiced for more than two thousand years, and, in fact, they have learned much in the course of history. For their part, it is to be hoped that Jews themselves can derive profit from Christian exegetical research. [The Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible* (English edition, Vatican Press, 2002)]

**W** Question 2.e. may well be no longer a cutting edge issue for the Presbyterians in your group, but if the Jewish participants can add special insights through their interpretations of the Hebrew text, be ready to join them in conversation.

**T** Go no further in use of this Session if you are following program emphasis B, on getting acquainted, or program emphasis D, on Israel.

## **II. Studying Biblical Text: A Focus on the Ten Commandments**

Display various translations, opened to the Ten Commandments, for viewing by those who arrive early to the meeting and those who remain at the end. Ask your pastor to bring a Septuagint (translation into Greek) and perhaps some early English translations, if possible. Biblical paraphrases (such as the *Living Bible* or *The Message*) or simplified translations (such as the *Contemporary English Version*) may be less useful for this display and discussion.

If there is not time for everything, the issue of translation is likely to elicit more discussion than the issue of the numbering systems for the commandments, which might be described without discussion or eliminated.

When you address the numbering of the commandments, make a chart showing the different systems or photocopy the chart in the *Guide* for distribution.

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## ENCOUNTERING THE TEXT: THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

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### PRESBYTERIAN HOMEWORK FOR SESSION FOUR

For Emphasis C1, provide Presbyterians with the chart on pages 21-22 and ask that they read the biblical passages. Someone might also read *An Invitation to Sabbath: Rediscovering a Gift* [a report on Sabbath keeping to the PC(USA) 212th General Assembly (2000), PDS #70-440-00-001].

For Emphasis C2, assign persons to prepare one or more special reports. Put them in contact with a pastor, rabbi, or other resource person if they need help in finding materials.

### PREPARING FOR SESSION FOUR

Depending on your plans:

- W** For Emphasis A, prepare to display the Tablets and explain their place.
- W** For Emphasis C1, copy the chart (and perhaps the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* quotations).
- W** For using a part of Session Seven in a meeting on the commandments, obtain a copy of *Thinking and Working Together: Study and Action Suggestions for Jewish and Christian Congregations* (PDS #243-93-037) and be prepared to discuss its future usefulness for exploring what you might do together as a social justice / social action project.
- W** Prepare the materials to distribute as homework for Session Five / Session Six. Prepare for special “homework” gathering(s) in advance of the next full meeting, if you decide to hold them.

### MEETING FOR SESSION FOUR

Suggestions for altering this session are based on the program emphasis you have chosen (see page 10 of this *Supplement*).

**T** Note that, if you have agreed on a term for the “commandments” that better expresses in English what is intended by the original Hebrew, that term should be used throughout your meeting(s) rather than the “commandment” language found here.

### Suggestions for Program Emphasis A

Organize the session so that you can cover all the material you intend to examine. Be sure there are elements in the meeting that provide sensory appeal or group involvement, beyond the usual discussion technique of asking questions. For example:

- W** Ask the Jewish participants if you might conveniently hold this meeting in the synagogue so that they might show their Tablets to the Christians and explain the Tablets’ place in Jewish traditions of worship, architecture, and art.
- W** Especially if you will not be seeing the Tablets in a synagogue, ask that someone write the Hebrew of each commandment separately on a large card that can be displayed and handled by Christians. Christians might also like to hear each commandment read in Hebrew. Aside from its simple visual and auditory interest, this exercise provides a sense of the brevity of each commandment in the original.
- W** Assign each commandment to an individual or a pair of individuals who can design a

way to introduce the basic introductory material in the *Guide* around that commandment. The facilitator will need to moderate the meeting and keep agreed time constraints.

Or, if your group is willing, provide the written introductions in the *Guide* to all participants in advance so that, when the meeting starts, you can move directly into discussion of the issues that follow the introductions of each commandment.

### **Suggestions for Program Emphasis C1**

Cover nine of the Ten Commandments briefly enough to allow time for special attention to the Sabbath commandment. This will enable discussion of a key issue: Do Christians appropriate and apply universally (to all humanity or to all believers) that which Jews see as particular to themselves?

#### **I. D Sabbath: additional material on Christian understandings**

Do Christians consider the Sabbath commandment to be speaking to them, or is it the one commandment they see as applying only to Jewish religious / ritual behavior? One answer may be found in a currently circulating PC(USA) paper, *An Invitation to Sabbath: Rediscovering a Gift* [report to the 212th PC(USA) General Assembly (2000)].

New Testament interpretation of the Sabbath reaches its pinnacle in the Epistle to the Hebrews:

So then, a sabbath rest still remains for the people of God; for those who enter God's rest also cease from their labors as God did from his.

[Hebrews 4:9-10, New Revised Standard Version]

The Sabbath is related back to God's rest on the seventh day of creation and extended forward to the eternal rest promised to God's people.

A whole series of narratives in the Gospels center on Jesus and the Sabbath. Most of these involve healing miracles and almost all involve controversy. An examination of them suggests that the ideas in Hebrews are consistent with Jesus' teachings and actions.

If desired, Christians may read the stories in the chart below ahead of the session and very briefly report on these to the entire group.

Matthew 12:1-8 = Mark 2:23-28 = Luke 6:1-5	Plucking grain: Sabbath made for humankind; Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath (no miracle)
Matthew 12:9-14 = Mark 3:1-6 = Luke 6:6-11	Man with withered hand healed: lawful to do good on the Sabbath
Mark 1:21-28 = Luke 4:31-37	Unclean spirit out of demon-possessed man
Mark 1:29-31	Healing of Peter's mother-in-law
Luke 4:16-30	Inaugural sermon in Nazareth (no miracle)
Luke 13:10-17	Crippled woman healed; do you not untie your animal on the Sabbath?
Luke 14:1-6	Man with dropsy healed; you pull animal out of pit on Sabbath

John 5:1-18

Man at pool healed, told to pick up his mat and walk on the Sabbath

John 9:1-14

Man born blind healed when Jesus put mud on his eyes on the Sabbath

See also mention of the Sabbath in Jesus' teaching:

Matthew 24:20

Urges followers to pray they will not have to flee on the Sabbath

(Does this indicate they kept the Sabbath?)

Christians often think of the Sabbath controversy stories in the Gospels as examples of "law (Jews) vs. grace (Christians)." Christian biblical scholars see something different:

The sabbath activities of Jesus are neither hurtful provocations nor mere protests against rabbinic legal restrictions, but are part of Jesus' essential proclamation of the inbreaking of the Kingdom of God in which [humans are] taught the original meaning of the sabbath as the recurring weekly proleptic "day of the Lord" \*\* in which God manifests healing and saving rulership over [humans].

. . . Jesus restores the sabbath to be a benefit for humankind against any distortions of human religious and/or cultic traditions. . . .

[Jesus] freed the sabbath from human restrictions and encumbrances and restored it by showing its universal import . . . so that every person can be the beneficiary of the divine intentions and true purposes of sabbath rest and joy.

[*The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, David Noel Freedman, ed. (New York, Doubleday, 1997, 1992), "Sabbath" article by Gerhard F. Hasel]

\*\* That is, anticipating the full realization of the Kingdom of God

Jesus is seen to be *universalizing* the Sabbath, that is, making the understanding and practice of it applicable to any and all persons. Does this interpretation of Jesus' activity point to differences between Jews' and Christians' understandings of the Sabbath?

Where else do we meet Christian *universalizing* of something in the biblical text that remains *particular* in Jewish scriptural interpretation?\*\*\* Especially when we encounter these differences, how can we interpret the scripture texts involved in such a way that they remain constructive guidance rather than a source of continuing controversy?

\*\*\* Do you see *universalizing* at work in the discussion of land in *A Theological Understanding of the Relationship between Christians and Jews*, Affirmation and Explication 6?

Do Christians today understand that they observe the Sabbath? If so, what are the elements in its observance? Can these elements be understood to grow out of a reading of the commandment to keep the Sabbath holy? How?

Do Jews today expect Christians to observe the Sabbath? If so, what elements do they expect in Christian observance? What elements do they understand to be exclusively Jewish?

## Suggestions for Program Emphasis C2

A discussion of each of the Ten Commandments may provide an appropriate basis for later group discussion about the motivations for Jews and Christians to work together now or in the future. In addition to the general discussion of each, you may want to find one of the commandments to discuss in more detail. Plan one or two meetings. In a two-meeting schedule, you might discuss the *Guide*'s Obligations to God section [I] in one meeting and the *Guide*'s Obligations to Others section [II] in the other.

Look at the above material on the Sabbath to see if it might provide the basis for conversation about "obligations to God." An example of a commandment to be used as a basis for special discussion of "obligations to others" would be "You shall not murder / kill":

### II. A The Taking of Life: Exploration of differences noted in the *Guide*

The considerable political and cultural ferment today around topics related to the taking of life points to the importance of substantive discussion of this theme in order to learn from differing Jewish and Christian interpretations and practices. Participants can discover where their common values lie and use these insights to help define the value they give to human life. This detailed conversation may connect to the more general ways you look at the other commandments about "obligations to others."

One or two Jews and Christians might be asked to prepare ahead some thoughts about one or more current issues related to the taking of life, such as war, self-protection against insecurity or terrorism, abortion, stem cell research, or euthanasia. This should lead to practical, life-related conversation rather than highly academic, theoretical discussion.

- W How does our biblical interpretation help us or continue to confuse us?
- W What is the role of the Ten Commandments in our national life? Does this or does this not make "You shall not kill / murder" a possible basis for public ethical debate about the value of human life?

### Using Elements of Session Seven During This Meeting

If you do not want to hold a separate meeting to cover the topics of Session Seven and want to incorporate evaluation into a meeting on the commandments, using the *Guide*'s Session Seven section on Reflections and Definitions (I. A, B, C) and the material on models (page 47) would be appropriate. Conclude by specifically deciding where you might go from here together.

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## THE MEANING OF ISRAEL FOR CHRISTIANS AND JEWS ISRAEL: CURRENT CHALLENGES

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### PRESBYTERIAN HOMEWORK FOR SESSION FIVE / SESSION SIX

Ask participants to read Affirmation and Explication 6 of *A Theological Understanding of the Relationship between Christian and Jews* within an overview of the entire document. Also distribute Appendix B of this *Supplement* as a commentary on the Explication 6 reference to Christian Zionism..

Consider calling a “homework for Christians” gathering in advance of your next Jewish-Christian meeting in order to use the study guide to *A Theological Understanding . . .*, Session 4, Part One, Affirmation 6, to assist your reflection on the paper’s presentation. Start with an additional question:

**W** How does our understanding of the faithfulness of God lead us to see God’s covenants as unbroken and God’s covenant promise of the land as continuing?

Before you stop your study and reflection, also ask:

**W** How do you understand “the seeking of justice” to be “a sign of our faith in the reign of God”?

If it is not feasible to gather Presbyterians separately, ask individuals to read the study guide section at home.

Suggest that at least some Presbyterians also read the quotations from the Confession of 1967 on the sheet, “Jews in Presbyterian Confessions.”

**W** How does the Confession of \*67 help us think about the question, Is either Judaism or Christianity simply a “religion”?

### PREPARING FOR SESSION FIVE / SESSION SIX

As you plan for one or two sessions on Israel, the suggestions that follow can help you to:

**W** use methods that allow for individual expression of personal viewpoints about Israel, which vary widely in both the Jewish and the Christian communities

**W** incorporate teaching prepared for Presbyterian Christians, as a particular group, by making extensive use of *A Theological Understanding of the Relationship between Christians and Jews* [adopted as a “provisional understanding” by the 199th PC(USA) General Assembly (1987)]

**T** It is strongly recommended that Session Five / Session Six not be used as an occasion to debate the merits of the actions of the PC(USA) 216th General Assembly (2004). Any discussion of these actions – whether on an individual basis or in a group – can best follow exploration of the more fundamental issues raised in the *Guide* during these sessions. The form of dialogue suggested below enables a group to remain focused on basic issues. Any group wanting to have a later exploration of the actions of the 216th PC(USA) General Assembly can find materials at the web site <[www.pcusa.org/israelandjewishrelations](http://www.pcusa.org/israelandjewishrelations)>. Do not enter discussion without getting the download; there is much misinformation afloat that could lead to debate based on ill-informed assumptions.

Depending on your plans, distribute materials to all participants in advance:

**W** Give all participants pages 29-36, 41-42 of the *Guide* for advance personal reading.

But note that the *Guide* materials provide general statements about Christians' views that differ in important aspects from the understandings in the Presbyterian document.

T Pages 36-38 are not recommended for use. Their view about Protestant documents fails to recognize the Presbyterian practice of duly elected representatives providing guidance to the church that is not "authoritative" but does carry weight. Additionally, Presbyterians, who are directed by scriptures, consider that they also must be attentive to concerns for justice and human freedom, to learnings from relationship with Jewish neighbors, and to their relationship with Palestinian Christians; separating these factors from one another tends to create unhelpful caricatures of their Christian approaches to Israel and Israeli-Palestinian peace.

w Offer Jewish partners a copy of *A Theological Understanding . . .*, or of its Affirmation and Explication 6, to be read in advance:

### MEETING(S) FOR SESSION FIVE / SESSION SIX

#### A First Option for Organizing Your Meeting(s): Silent Listening

It is suggested that you use a dialogue method that emphasizes understanding by focusing on silent listening to each other without any answering back or responding to what has been said:

w It is likely best to choose one Jew and one Christian to take turns moderating. These facilitators should firmly help everyone maintain the rules of this dialogue method without losing the goodwill of participants.

w Each person should speak only once on any given question. Do not establish any order of speaking based on criteria such as where people are sitting or whether they are Jewish or Christian.

w When someone else is speaking, listen intently. Work to cut off in your own head any thoughts about a response to what is being said by someone else. Attempt instead to understand what the other person is feeling as well as thinking, but do not ask any questions.

w Do not interrupt anyone who is speaking.

w When you are prepared to express your own views, indicate your readiness to the facilitator. If you must wait for a chance to speak, avoid spending the intervening time rehearsing in your head what you will say. Keep listening.

w When you speak, do so personally, as an individual (not a representative on behalf of any group – be it "all Jews," "all Christians," "all Presbyterians" or "all Reform Judaism," Israelis or Palestinians. Tell your own story, express your own feelings, share your own understandings. If you want to express your personal affirmation of what your community's corporate stance is, claim the stance as your own.

w Always remember to speak with respect and consideration.

w Remember that everything said in the meeting is "off the record," not to be repeated in some other setting.

w Don't let yourself worry about "what we have concluded" as a result of this kind of dialogue. If group members are being open and honest, sharing emotions and words, you can trust that no one in your group will be unchanged by this mutual experience.

w After the conclusion of the meeting(s), provide opportunity for people to interact with one another on a personal level. This is the time for a gracious refreshment period.



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**Affirmation 6.** We affirm the continuity of God's promise of land along with the obligations of that promise to the people Israel.

**Explication**

As the Church of Scotland's (1985) report says:

We are aware that in dealing with this matter we are entering a minefield of complexities across which is strung a barbed-wire entanglement of issues, theological, political and humanitarian.

However, a faithful explication of biblical material relating to the covenant with Abraham cannot avoid the reality of the promise of land. The question with which we must wrestle is how this promise is to be understood in the light of the existence of the modern political State of Israel which has taken its place among the nations of the world.

The Genesis record indicates that "the land of your sojournings" was promised to Abraham and his and Sarah's descendants. This promise, however, included the demand that "You shall keep my covenant. . . ." (Genesis 17:7-8). The implication is that the blessings of the promise were dependent upon fulfillment of covenant relationships. Disobedience could bring the loss of land, even while God's promise was not revoked. God's promises are always kept, but in God's own way and time.

The establishment of the State of Israel in our day has been seen by many devout Jews as the fulfillment of God's divine promise. Other Jews are equally sure that it is not and regard the State of Israel as an unauthorized attempt to flee divinely imposed exile. Still other Jews interpret the State of Israel in purely secular terms. Christian opinion is equally diverse. As Reformed Christians, however, we believe that no government at any time can ever be the full expression of God's will. All, including the State of Israel, stand accountable to God. The State of Israel is a geo-political entity and is not to be validated theologically.

God's promise of land bears with it obligation. Land is to be used as the focus of mission, the place where a people can live and be a light to the nations. Further, because land is God's to be given, it can never be fully possessed. The living out of God's covenant in the land brings with it not only opportunity but also temptation. The history of the people of Israel reveals the continual tension between sovereignty and stewardship, blessing and curse.

The Hebrew prophets made clear to the people of their own day as well, indeed, as *any* day, that those in possession of "land" have a responsibility and obligation to the disadvantaged, the oppressed, and the "strangers in their gates." God's justice, unlike ours, is consistently in favor of the powerless (Ps. 103:6). Therefore we, whether Christian or Jew, who affirm the divine promise of land, however land is to be understood, dare not fail to uphold the divine right of the dispossessed. We have indeed been agents of the dispossession of others. In particular, we confess our complicity in the loss of land by Palestinians, and we join with those of our Jewish sisters and brothers who stand in solidarity with Palestinians as they cry for justice as the dispossessed.

We disavow any teaching which says that peace can be secured without justice through the exercise of violence and retribution. God's justice upholds those who cry out against the strong. God's peace comes to those who do justice and mercy on the earth. Hence we look with dismay at the violence and injustice occurring in the Middle East.

For 3,000 years the covenant promise of land has been an essential element of the self-understanding of Jewish people. Through centuries of dispersion and exile, Jews have continued to understand themselves as a people in relation to the God they have known through the promise of land. However, to understand that promise solely in terms of a specific geographical entity on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean is, in our view, inadequate.

"Land" is understood as more than place or property; "land" is a biblical metaphor for sustainable life, prosperity, peace, and security. We affirm the rights to these essentials for the Jewish people. At the same time, as bearers of the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ, we affirm those same rights in the name of justice to all peoples. We are aware that those rights are not realized by all persons in our day. Thus we affirm our solidarity with all people to whom those rights of "land" are currently denied.

We disavow those views held by some dispensationalists and some Christian Zionists that see the formation of the State of Israel as a signal of the end time, which will bring the Last Judgment, a conflagration which only Christians will survive. These views ignore the word of Jesus against seeking to set the time or place of the consummation of

world history.

We therefore call on all people of faith to engage in the work of reconciliation and peacemaking. We pray for and encourage those who would break the cycles of vengeance and violence, whether it be the violence of states or of resistance movements, of terror or of retaliation. We stand with those who work toward nonviolent solutions, including those who choose nonviolent resistance. We also urge nation states and other political institutions to seek negotiated settlements of conflicting claims.

The seeking of justice is a sign of our faith in the reign of God.

*From A Theological Understanding of the Relationship between Christians and Jews, adopted by the 199th General Assembly (1987) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as a “provisional understanding” for study and reflection.*

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Devote one or two meetings to listening to participants’ stories, ideas, and feelings in response to general, leading questions. Choose no more than one question from each of the four categories below per meeting, so that there is time for people to speak on the questions without being pressured. Alternately, choose two of the categories for more substantive discussion in one meeting and address the other two categories at the next meeting.

Category 1:

**w** What were your childhood thoughts about the “Holy Land” or Israel? How have your thoughts changed since childhood? What caused them to change?

**w** How has your awareness of the present state of Israel grown? Where do you get your information about Israel and about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? Do you think it is adequate?

Category 2:

**w** Where would you place yourself on the spectrum of views between, on the one hand, those who see the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a struggle for Jewish survival and, on the other hand, those who see it as a struggle involving conflicting rights and moral claims of two sides? What difference does it make what your views are?

**w** How do you think Christians and Jews differ in their understandings of Israel? How do you think they differ in their views of Palestinians? Why?

**w** What would you hope that persons in the other religious community (Christians for Jews, Jews for Christians) would appreciate more about your views on Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict than most seem to now? How does this affect your relationships with persons in the other community?

Category 3:

**w** Do you consider the land of Israel “holy” for you or for others in your religious tradition? If so, in what way? Is this important to you? Why?

**w** Do you think of yourself as being part of a people who are in covenant with God? If so, do you think of this relationship as including the covenant promise of land? In what way?

**w** Do you think the concept of a promised land can be universalized to include anything other than a concrete physical place? People other than Jews? Why or why not?

**w** What obligations do you believe accompany God’s covenant promises? How does this affect the way you judge the state of Israel?

**w** What do you think is the importance of the land of Israel for Jews? How, if at all, do you believe the future of the Jewish people is entwined with the reality of Israel as a sovereign political entity?

Option 4:

**w** What do you think is the significance of the Christian understanding that all Christians are related to one another in a worldwide fellowship instituted by God? What do you think about the problem of western Christians trying to speak for Palestinian Christians as brothers / sisters in faith, or of their not speaking about them and thereby rendering them invisible in conversations that affect Palestinian well-being?

**w** To what extent is your identity as a Jew or your identity as a Christian expressed in cultural, national, ethnic, and religious terms? What do you think are the differences between Christians' and Jews' understandings of their identity, if any?

**w** What difference does it make to you when you think of Judaism defined as a "religion" versus Jews defined as a "people"?

### **A Second Option for Organizing Your Meeting(s): Silent Listening and Time for Reflection**

Modify the dialogue method used in the First Option by engaging in a second round of silent listening to one another. After each person who wishes to do so has spoken, the facilitators invite each person to take one more opportunity to respond to the same question that was addressed in the first round of contributions. The second round will likely be based upon individuals' further reflections upon the question, with special insights coming from what has been heard in the intense listening. Nevertheless, no direct reference to what another person has said should be offered as a rebuttal or response.

### **A Third Option for Organizing Your Meeting(s): Silent Listening and Discussion**

Modify the dialogue method used in the First Option by opening the meeting to discussion following the silent listening. Begin with a question from category 1, then, as soon as each person who wishes to do so has spoken once, discuss what you have heard. After a set time, move to each of the other categories and engage in similar times of sharing / listening and discussion. Carefully manage time, even if you are planning two meetings for Session Five / Session Six. Announce the amount of time you will spend in discussion, then cut discussion at the end of that period.

Remind participants of the mutually prepared Jewish-Christian guidelines for discussing the Middle East found on pages 8-9 of this *Supplement*.

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## TOWARD OUR FUTURE

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### PREPARING FOR SESSION SEVEN

**w** Decide what portions of this session you will use, depending on the time available and your objective for the session. Are you planning a conclusion to a study / dialogue series? Or are you planning to urge further meetings and / or a joint project in the near future?

**w** Obtain a copy of *Thinking and Working Together: Study and Action Suggestions for Jewish and Christian Congregations* (PDS #243-93-037) and be prepared to discuss its possible use related to a future social justice / social action project.

**w** If you plan to use the video, preview segment 6 of the “Walking God’s Paths” (or arrange a well-planned reading of the script).

### MEETING FOR SESSION SEVEN

#### I. Reflections and Definitions

Be sure to use at least some of this segment, perhaps I.B because of its interactive nature.

#### III. “Walking God’s Paths” Video

Use all or part of this only if you have sufficient time.

In any case, you can use the question at the bottom of the *Guide*’s page 44, perhaps reworded as:

**w** Can we recognize the legitimacy of one another without suggesting that “every interpretation is a subjective opinion and therefore anything goes?”

**w** If so, what standards in *each* of our traditions assist us in being open to the other while remaining fully committed to our own tradition?

#### II. Plans for Further Study

If your objectives call for examining the possibility of doing more together, use this segment, perhaps combining it with the parts of III.B on pages 46-47 of the *Guide*.

#### IV. Evaluation

You have likely been doing some evaluation regularly during your study / dialogue meetings. Nevertheless, use the three suggested questions on page 47, preferably asking each individual to write a response:

**w** What did you enjoy most about this program? What did you enjoy least?

**w** What would you suggest be done differently if this program is repeated here or elsewhere?

**w** Has this program sparked an interest in future dialogue opportunities? How? What would you like to do in the future?

## APPENDIX A

### FOR REFLECTION AND GENERAL INFORMATION

Prepare yourself for a study / dialogue session on “Metaphors, Images, and Stereotypes” by reading through the material below fairly quickly, for general impressions. As you do so, think about one or more of the following questions:

W What changes in attitude or stance about Jews do you see between the different confessions? Does the image of Jews and Judaism shift?

W In what ways do you think the confessions reflect the thinking of the times in which they were written?

W In which confessions do you think the writers have an image of Jews based upon biblical knowledge only, and which might have had writers who also had an image of Jews from their own time?

W What teachings do you see that would encourage relationships with Jews? Would discourage relationships?

W What kind of stereotypes do you see, if any?

(A definition: A stereotype is a fixed mental picture held by one group of people about another group. It is an oversimplified opinion made without regard for individual differences.)

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### JEWES IN PRESBYTERIAN CONFESSIONS

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In every age the church has expressed its witness in words and deeds as the needs of the time required. . . . Confessions and declarations are subordinate standards in the church, subject to the authority of Jesus Christ, the Word of God, as the Scriptures bear witness to him. No one type of confession is exclusively valid, no one statement is irreformable. Obedience to Jesus Christ alone identifies the one universal church and supplies the continuity of its tradition. This obedience is the ground of the church's duty and freedom to reform itself in life and doctrine as new occasions, in God's providence, may demand. (*The Confession of 1967*, Preface)

#### **From the *Brief Statement of Faith* (1990):**

Yet God acts in justice and mercy to redeem creation

In everlasting love,

the God of Abraham and Sarah chose a covenant people  
to bless all families of the earth.

Hearing their cry,

God delivered the children of Israel  
from the house of bondage.

Loving us still,

God makes us heirs with Christ of the covenant.

Like a mother who will not forsake her nursing child,  
like a father who runs to welcome the prodigal home,

God is faithful still.

**From the *Confession of 1967, Part II (1967):***

REVELATION AND RELIGION. The church in its mission encounters the religions of men and in that encounter becomes conscious of its own human character as a religion. God's revelation to Israel, expressed within Semitic culture, gave rise to the religion of the Hebrew people. God's revelation in Jesus Christ called forth the response of Jews and Greeks and came to expression within Judaism and Hellenism as the Christian religion. The Christian religion, as distinct from God's revelation of himself, has been shaped throughout its history by the cultural forms of its environment.

The Christian finds parallels between other religions and his own and must approach all religions with openness and respect. Repeatedly God has used the insight of non-Christians to challenge the church to renewal. But the reconciling word of the gospel is God's judgment upon all forms of religion, including the Christian. The gift of God in Christ is for all men. The church, therefore, is commissioned to carry the gospel to all men whatever their religion may be and even when they profess none.

**From the *Confession of 1967, Part I (1967):***

God expressed his love for all mankind through Israel, whom he chose to be his covenant people to serve him in love and faithfulness. When Israel was unfaithful, he disciplined the nation with his judgments and maintained his cause through prophets, priests, teachers, and true believers. These witnesses called all Israelites to a destiny in which they would serve God faithfully and become a light to the nations. The same witnesses proclaimed the coming of a new age, and a true servant of God in whom God's purpose for Israel and for mankind would be realized.

Out of Israel God in due time raised up Jesus. His faith and obedience were the response of the perfect child of God. He was the fulfillment of God's promise to Israel, the beginning of the new creation, and the pioneer of the new humanity. He gave history its meaning and direction and called the church to be his servant for the reconciliation of the world.

[*The Theological Declaration of Barman* is set within the context of the German State in 1934.]

**From the *Larger Catechism, Question 34 (1647):***

Q. How was the covenant of grace administered under the Old Testament?

A. The covenant of grace was administered under the Old Testament, by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the passover, and other types and ordinances, which did all foreshadow Christ then to come, and were for that time sufficient to build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah, by whom they then had full remission of sin and eternal salvation.

**From the *Larger Catechism, Question 111 (1647):***

Q. What do we pray for in the second petition [of the Lord's Prayer]?

A. In the second petition (which is, "Thy kingdom come"), acknowledging ourselves and all mankind to be by nature under the dominion of sin and Satan, we pray that the kingdom of sin and Satan may be destroyed, the gospel propagated throughout the world, the Jews called, the fullness of the Gentiles brought in, . . . that the ordinances of Christ may be purely dispensed, and made effectual to the converting of those that are yet in their sins, and the confirming, comforting, and building up of those that are already converted, that Christ would rule in their hearts here, and hasten the time of his coming, and our reigning with him forever . . .

**From the *Westminster Confession, Chapter VII (1647):***

5. This covenant [of grace] was differently administered in the time of the law, and in the time of the gospel under the law it was administered by promises, prophecies, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and

other types and ordinances delivered to the people of the Jews, all fore-signifying Christ to come, which were for that time sufficient and efficacious, through the operation of the Spirit, to instruct and build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah, by whom they had full remission of sins, and eternal salvation, and is called the Old Testament.

6. Under the gospel, when Christ the substance was exhibited, the ordinances in which this covenant is dispensed, are the preaching of the Word, and the administration of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, which, though fewer in number, and administered with more simplicity and less outward glory, yet in them it is held forth in more fullness, evidence, and spiritual efficacy, to all nations, both Jews and Gentiles, and is called the New Testament. There are not, therefore, two covenants of grace differing in substance, but one and the same under various dispensations.

**From the *Westminster Confession*, Chapter XXII, Chapter XX (1647):**

. . . under the New Testament, the liberty of Christians is further enlarged in their freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law, to which the Jewish church was subjected; and in greater boldness of access to the throne of grace, and in fuller communications of the free Spirit of God, than believers under the law did ordinarily partake of.

**The *Second Helvetic Confession*, Chapter II (1566):**

Moreover, the Jews in former times had the traditions of their elders; but these traditions were severely rejected by the Lord, indicating that the keeping of them hinders God's law, and that God is worshiped in vain by such traditions (Matt. 15:1ff; Mark 7:1ff).

**The *Second Helvetic Confession*, Chapter III (1566):**

HERESIES. Therefore we condemn the Jews and the Mohammedans, and all those who blaspheme that sacred and adorable Trinity. We also condemn all heresies and heretics who teach that the Son and Holy Spirit are God in name only, and also that there is something unequal in it, a greater or a less, something corporeal or corporeally conceived, something different with respect to character or will, something mixed or solitary, as if the Son and Holy Spirit were the affections and properties of one God the Father, as the Monarchians, Praxeas, Sabellius, Paul of Samosata, Aëtius, Macedonius, Anthropomorphites, Arius, and such like, have thought.

**The *Second Helvetic Confession*, Chapter XI (1566):**

CHRIST IS TRUE GOD. . . . And in another place in the Gospel it is written: "The Jews sought all the more to kill him because he . . . called God his Father, making himself equal with God" (John 5:8).

**From the *Second Helvetic Confession*, Chapter XV (1566):**

James said that works justify, yet without contradicting the apostle (otherwise he would have to be rejected) but showing that Abraham proved his living and justifying faith by works. This all the pious do, but they trust in Christ alone and not in their own works.

**The *Second Helvetic Confession*, Chapter XVII (1566):**

THE TWO PEOPLES. Generally two peoples are usually counted, namely, the Israelites and the Gentiles, or those who have been gathered from among the Jews and Gentiles into the Church. There are also two Testaments, the Old and New. THE SAME CHURCH FOR THE OLD AND NEW PEOPLE. Yet from all these people there was and is one fellowship, one salvation in the one Messiah, in whom, as members of one body under one Head, all united together in the same faith, partaking also of the same spiritual food and drink. Yet here we acknowledge a diversity of times, and a diversity in the signs of the promised and

delivered Christ, and that now the ceremonies being abolished, the light shines unto us more clearly, and blessings are given to us more abundantly, and a fuller liberty.

**From the *Second Helvetic Confession*, Chapter XVIII (1566):**

PRIESTS AND PRIESTHOOD. Surely in the new covenant of Christ there is no longer any such priesthood as was under the ancient people, which had an external anointing, holy garments, and very many ceremonies which were types of Christ, who abolished them all by his coming and fulfilling them.

**From the *Second Helvetic Confession*, Chapter XXIV (1566), concerning the Lord's Day:**

SUPERSTITION. In this connection we do not yield to the Jewish observance and to superstitions. For we do not believe that one day is any holier than another, or think that rest in itself is acceptable to God. Moreover, we celebrate the Lord's Day and not the Sabbath as a free observance.

**From the *Heidelberg Catechism*, question 19 (1563):**

Q. Whence do you know this? [re Jesus Christ]

A. From the holy gospel, which God himself revealed in the beginning in the Garden of Eden, afterward proclaimed through the holy patriarchs and foreshadowed through the sacrifices and other rites of the Old Covenant, and finally fulfilled through his own well-beloved Son.

**From the *Scots Confession*, Chapter V (1560):**

The Continuance, Increase, and Preservation of the Kirk

We most surely believe that God preserved, instructed, multiplied, honored, adorned, and called from death to life his Kirk in all ages since Adam until the coming of Christ Jesus in the flesh. For he called Abraham from his father's country, instructed him, and multiplied his seed; he marvelously preserved him, and more marvelously delivered his seed from the bondage and tyranny of Pharaoh; to them he gave his laws, constitutions, and ceremonies; to them he gave the land of Canaan; after he had given them judges, and afterwards Saul, he gave David to be king, to whom he gave promise that of the fruit of his loins should one sit forever upon his royal throne. To this same people from time to time he sent prophets, to recall them to the right way of their God, from which sometimes they strayed by idolatry. And although, because of their stubborn contempt for righteousness he was compelled to give them into the hands of their enemies, as had previously been threatened by the mouth of Moses, so that the holy city was destroyed, the temple burned with fire, and the whole land desolate for seventy years, yet in mercy he restored them again to Jerusalem, where the city and temple were rebuilt, and they endured against all temptations and assaults of Satan till the Messiah came according to the promise.

**From the *Scots Confession*, Chapter XVI (1560):**

This Kirk is catholic, that is, universal, because it contains the chosen of all ages, of all realms, nations, and tongues, be they of the Jews or be they of the Gentiles, who have communion and society with God the Father, and with his Son, Christ Jesus, through the sanctification of the Holy Spirit.

**From the *Scots Confession*, Chapter XVIII (1560):**

[Satan] has incited cruel murderers to persecute, trouble, and molest the true Kirk and its members, as Cain did to Abel, Ishmael to Isaac, Esau to Jacob, and the whole priesthood of the Jews to Christ Jesus himself and his apostles after him.

**From the *Scots Confession*, Chapter XXI (1560):**

As the fathers under the Law, besides the reality of the sacrifices, had two chief sacraments, that is, circumcision and the passover, and those who rejected these were not reckoned among God's people; so do we acknowledge and confess that now in the time of the gospel we have two chief sacraments, which



alone were instituted by the Lord Jesus and commanded to be used by all who will be counted members of his body, that is, Baptism and the Supper or Table of the Lord Jesus, . . . These sacraments, both of the Old Testament and of the New, were instituted by God not only to make a visible distinction between his people and those who were without the Covenant, but also to exercise the faith of his children and, by participation of these sacraments, to seal in their hearts the assurance of his promise, and of that most blessed conjunction, union, and society, which the chosen have with their Head, Christ Jesus.

## APPENDIX B

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### CHRISTIAN ZIONISM AND THE BASIC TEACHINGS OF REFORMED THEOLOGY

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Christian Zionism that grows out of a “dispensational” biblical reading sees the establishment of the state of Israel as a catalyst for the “end times.” Many Christian Zionists use this reading of scripture to interpret current events and to shape political goals. On this basis, they support Jewish territorial claims while at the same time believing that the Jewish people, as Jews, must either convert or perish in hell fire.

Presbyterian teaching is that the Christian Zionist view of scripture and of current events is “inconsistent with the basic values of Reformed theology,” in the words of the PC(USA) 216th General Assembly (2004).<sup>\*</sup> Previously, in 1987, Christian Zionism was disavowed in the study document, *A Theological Understanding of the Relationship between Christians and Jews*, and, earlier still, the PCUS General Assembly addressed the church concerning the underlying issues of dispensationalism (1944) and eschatology (1978).

The PCUS 118th General Assembly (1978), in its teaching about eschatology, referred to the central Reformed theological concept of the sovereignty of God and thereby critiqued the concept that human political agendas affect the “last things”:

- (5) God’s sovereignty is the most important affirmation in our understanding of God’s final purpose, such purpose assured by the work of Jesus Christ . . .
- (6) The Cosmos will at last be redeemed in all its fullness from the bondage of sin, decay and death; not as the end result of any historical process which may now be observed, but purely and only because God has determined that it will be so.\*\*

Concerning the doctrine of last things and the Church’s mission, the same Assembly said:

Neither nihilistic despair nor romantic idealism is a proper response to the declaration of God’s purpose in Jesus Christ. Rather, we work to make visible in the world the reality of God’s love, which is graciously transforming us even now, and we continue to declare the good news that in Jesus Christ the future is secure. God’s purpose will indeed be brought to consummation. And we have heard the good news that the One who will stand as Judge is none other than the One who gave Himself to show forth God’s love for the world.\*\*\*

\* A summary of the 216th General Assembly (2004) action is at <[www.pcusa.org/israelandandjewishrelations](http://www.pcusa.org/israelandandjewishrelations)>.

\*\* Reprinted in the *Eschatology* resource prepared by the Office of Theology and Worship, (page 2), [download from <[www.pcusa.org/theologyandworship/issues/reflection.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/theologyandworship/issues/reflection.htm)>], from “12 Theses”

\*\*\* From section IV.B., reprinted in *op.cit.*, page 20; also quoted in the *Between Millennia* paper, page 9, prepared by the Office of Theology and Worship, 2001 [PDS #70-420-01-007 or download from <[www.pcusa.org/theologyandworship/issues/reflection.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/theologyandworship/issues/reflection.htm)>].