

Travel Fund for Witness in the Middle East*

With faith in the transforming power of the Inner Light, Friends seek information and understanding among all people involved in a conflict, and offer care to all who suffer.

Goals and expectations

The purpose of the Travel Fund for Witness in the Middle East is to assist financially members or attenders of Ann Arbor Friends Meeting (AAFM) to learn firsthand about the daily life of Palestinians in the occupied territories as well as the complexities that affect all who are involved in the conflict.

In most cases, trips will be arranged through organizations that regularly lead delegations such as Holy Land Trust, American Friends Service Committee, Fellowship of Reconciliation, International Solidarity Movement, and Christian Peacemaker Teams. In addition to getting to know Palestinians' day-to-day experiences under occupation, participants in these groups may meet with Palestinian and Israeli peace groups and observe and listen to the experiences and perspectives of a wide range of people. Such trips provide insight into the problems that face both Israelis and Palestinians. Nonviolent action for peace is a possible activity, though not required for use of the fund. In this context, it is important to affirm that Friends stand in opposition to all violence.

Recipients of the fund will be expected to educate themselves about the history and current status of the conflict prior to their departure, to cover a portion of the costs of the trip to the best of their ability, and upon return to share their experiences and insights with AAFM adults or youth and, if possible, with the general public.

Application procedures

Well in advance of their proposed trip, those interested in applying for funds should supply the Peace and Social Concerns Committee (PSCC) with a letter detailing a description of the trip, an estimate of costs, and a review of their reasons for undertaking the journey. PSCC will form a clearness committee to help applicants consider their plans, their readiness, and their financial need for assistance. The clearness committee will recommend additional counseling or training in conflict resolution or peaceful communication as needed, and will report back to PSCC about the candidate's readiness to make the journey. The PSCC will then give its recommendation to Meeting for Worship for Business, which will make the final decision.

Recipients will be advised that AAFM's funding for travel with a specific organization does not represent endorsement of the views or activities of the group or its members. Additionally, recipients will be asked to sign a statement that frees the AAFM of responsibility for risks (legal, financial, or bodily) they take on to themselves or others as a result of this trip.

Funding

The Travel Fund for Witness in the Middle East will be established by AAFM with donations designated for that purpose. The Fund may be modified or laid down if the Meeting determines that the situation in the area has changed.

**The Travel Fund was the inspiration of a member of the Ann Arbor Meeting whose own travel experience led to a deeper understanding of the situation of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. His initial proposal has been modified through consideration by the Peace and Social Concerns Committee, by Meetings for Business, and by meetings and correspondence among interested Friends.*