

Studying “A Call to Action”:  
A Curriculum for Congregational Study Groups

Created for Kairos USA

To facilitator:

This study guide is designed to take you through a series of six sessions, designed for two hours each meeting, with a short break in the middle.

*Directions for the facilitator are in italics.* Suggested talking points and quotations from documents for the facilitator to read aloud are in regular font.

In addition to this guide, written in outline form, is an Appendix that contains the handouts and resources necessary for participants to use, and for you to use as visual aids. These will need to be printed out and photocopied. In most cases, only a few copies will be needed, as participants working together in small groups will share them. Each handout is numbered and this number is indicated in this guide.

Other materials needed include:

- Chalk or white-board or flip chart for writing up notes from group discussion.
- A facilitator might choose to create power-point presentations for some of the talking points. This is not necessary to facilitate this curriculum, but is a possible choice.
- A DVD-player for Session Two to show clips from *Steadfast Hope*; the facilitator may choose to use clips from other documentaries or other resources to help participants understand the situation “on the ground.” Using visuals, whether photographs or video clips, are strongly recommended.
- At least one copy of *Steadfast Hope*, as there are several concise readings, as well as the DVD, that are used here. This can be purchased from several sources, including:
  - <http://epfnational.org/PIN/the-episcopal-version-steadfast-hope-now-available/>
  - <http://presbypeacefellowship.org/node/252>
  - Note that currently *Steadfast Hope* has a version adapted for the Presbyterian (USA) context and for the Episcopal Church context. However, the parts being used for this study are not denominationally specific.

- Each participant should have a copy of the Kairos USA document, “A Call to Action: U.S. Response to Kairos Palestine” to read at home and bring to class. This can be downloaded as a PDF or order as a booklet from the KUSA website, [www.kairosusa.org](http://www.kairosusa.org).
- Each participant should have a copy of the Kairos Palestine document, “A Moment of Truth: A Word of Faith, Hope and Love from the Heart of Palestinian Suffering” to read at home and bring to class. This can be downloaded as a PDF from the Kairos Palestine website (<http://www.kairospalestine.ps/sites/default/Documents/English.pdf>) and from the KUSA website, under “Key Links and Resources.”
- Bibles—have several available for participants to share.
- There are handouts that go with each session. In most cases, you do not need to make copies for every single participant; indeed, you should seek to avoid wasting paper where possible. Please review carefully how the handouts are used to determine how many copies are necessary. It would also be possible to use an overhead projector in most cases, reducing need for paper handouts.
- In some sessions, the facilitator may want to create a more worshipful/meditative space for some of the activities. Depending on tradition and context, this might include a cross, candles and a table with tablecloth to create a focal point for a group gathered in a circle, or it might mean moving to a chapel or sanctuary.
- We recognize that it may be challenging to hold an educational series that lasts for six weeks for two hours each time. You are welcome to adapt this to fit your needs. We will create examples of how to shorten and adapt this curriculum in the future, and they will be made available on the [kairosusa.org](http://kairosusa.org) website.

## Session One: What is Kairos Theology?

### Objectives:

- 1) *Develop a sense of group familiarity.*
- 2) *Establish covenant for productive and open discussion.*
- 3) *Introduce Kairos Theology in order to establish the context for Kairos Palestine and Kairos USA.*

### Preparations:

- *Have schedule for the session written out on a board or on flipchart, or projected on the screen via powerpoint or overhead projector.*
- *If possible have participants indicate in advance the level of knowledge about and connection to Israel-Palestine. This could be done through a pre-registration process, a quick survey, or informal conversation. If this cannot be done in advance, take a few minutes during this session to gather this information.*
- *Have participants read the Introduction, Preamble and “Our Kairos Legacy” sections from KAIROS USA in preparation.*
- *Print out copies of **Handouts 1.1-1.5**; You should have enough copies of Handout 1.1 and 1.5 everyone in the group to read (perhaps one copy for every two participants); **Handouts 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4** will be read in small groups, so you can have one handout per group.*

### Getting to Know Each Other (25 minutes)

- *Welcome everyone.*
- *Give quick overview of schedule.*
- *Introductions*
  - *Ask each person to introduce self and to share ONE reason why he/she is taking the course.*
  - *As facilitator, model this by going first. Set the model by making sure your introduction is brief but substantive.*
  - *If the group is 20 participants or less, keep this in one group, ideally in a circle. Take notes of the reasons for taking the course on flipchart paper or on the board. If the group is larger than this, consider breaking up into smaller groups. Ask each group to write out on flipchart paper the reasons people are taking the course, so that this can be posted for the entire class to see.*
- *Getting a sense of the room*
  - *By show of hands, ask students to indicate their prior experience they with the Israel-Palestine topic.*
    - *How many have visited the region?*
    - *How many have lived in the region?*
    - *How many have family connections to the region?*

- How many have attended films, lectures or conferences on the topic?
- How many have participated in a previous study, such as *Steadfast Hope*, or another study?
- How many have read about the topic?
- How many have followed the topic through the news?
- *This will help the facilitator gain a sense of how much background to the conflict will be needed for Session Two.*

### *Establishing a Covenant (10 min)*

- *Review objectives for the entire course (with key words listed either on a powerpoint slide or flipchart).*
  - To understand the context and purpose of the Kairos USA document, its relationship to the Kairos Palestine document, and what Christians in the Holy Land are calling on U.S. Christians to do.
  - To begin to wrestle with the theological and biblical issues raised by this issue, and explore what is at stake for us as Christians and for the Church today.
  - To empower participants to engage in concrete, thoughtful action that is mindful of our roles as U.S. Christians in our relationship with Palestinian Christians, Jews and Muslims.
- *Facilitator explains:*
- Engaging in study and discussion about Israel-Palestine often raises strong emotions and significant disagreement, and it is important to create a classroom space in which participants can feel safe to explore ideas, opinions, hopes and fears in confidence and without being judged.
- In order to do this, we should establish a covenant, i.e. mutually agreed-upon guidelines, for our time together.
- *Ask for ideas from the group. These might include:*
  - Respect each other's viewpoints (ask for an illustration of what that looks like in action).
  - There is no such thing as a dumb question.
  - Fully participate in activities.
  - Complete homework assignments.
  - Actively listen when someone is speaking (ask for examples of what that looks like in action).
  - Arriving on time and attending regularly.
  - Using "I" statements to avoid making generalizations and assuming that everyone holds the same view.
- *Write these up on flip-chart paper. Once the group has finished brainstorming ideas, ask if there are any questions or concerns about what is listed. It is important that the entire group is comfortable with the list, so if there are any points that someone cannot agree to, modify or eliminate it.*
- *Once questions have been clarified and the group indicates it is comfortable with the list, ask if everyone is comfortable with this as the class covenant.*

- *Post this on a wall of the room. You might clean this up for the next session, or keep this list as written, but it is important to bring it back each week and post, so that, if necessary, the facilitator can refer back to it if there is a problem.*

### Defining Kairos Theology (20 min)

- *Read Mark 1:14-15 and 13:33*
  - “Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, “The KAIROS is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”
  - [Jesus said:] “Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the KAIROS will come.”
- *Go over definition of “Kairos” (have definition written on flip chart or in powerpoint slide)*
  - “Kairos” is one of two Greek words for “time” used in the Bible
  - “Chronos” is sequential, linear time, (e.g. “chronological”); what we normally think of when we think about time.
  - “Kairos” is an undetermined period of time in which something special happens; the appointed time in the purpose of God; a crisis moment that demands action.
  - In the passage from the Gospel of Mark we just read, we see this word used to describe the Kairos moment in which the Kingdom of God comes near. It is both fulfilled in the coming of Jesus, and is anticipated with Jesus’ return. In both cases, the idea of time is one in which something totally new is happening – something breaking through that we will miss if we don’t have eyes to see and ears to hear.
  - It is this biblical sense of time that informs the sense of urgency and action in Kairos theology.
  - In order to understand the Kairos Palestine and Kairos USA documents, we need to place them within this tradition of Kairos theology. This is the goal for today.
- *Distribute “**Handout 1.1: Karl Barth and the Barmen Declaration**”*
  - Karl Barth (pronounced “Bart”) is attributed to have said that one must do theology “with the bible in one hand the newspaper in the other.” Why might these two items be the essential sources for doing theology? What do we gain from reading deeply in both of these sources?
  - Who was Karl Barth? *(have someone read the short bio)*
  - What was the “Kairos” moment Barth was responding to in his own context?
  - *Look at the example from the Barmen Declaration and its distinct components: social analysis, theological reflection, and call to action.*
  - This is the model of a “Kairos Document.”

### Break (10 min)

- *Before the break, explain that they will return to meet in small groups. You may decide to assign these by counting off or simply grouping chairs together. Or, if the space was already set up with participants at tables, keep them at tables. Make sure the small groups are no larger than 4-5 people each.*

#### Exploring the Kairos Legacy (25 min)

- *Distribute handouts to the groups (each group gets one of the three handouts).*
  - *Martin Luther King’s 1967 Riverside Church speech (**Handout 1.2**)*
  - *Kairos South Africa, 1985 (**Handout 1.3**)*
  - *Kairos USA 1994 (**Handout 1.4**)*
- *Each group spends time reading through the handout together, and then answering the questions.*
  - *What is the context out of which the document is written?*
  - *What theological issues are at stake? What concepts are used or implied? What bible passages are used?*
  - *What actions or responses are called for? From whom? Why?*
- *Have each group report back, briefly describing the document they read and what their answers to the above questions.*
- *Large group discussion:*
  - *What similarities do you see across these documents?*
    - *Specific to a time and place in history*
    - *Common theological themes and concepts*
    - *Aspect of urgency*
  - *What differences?*
- *Summarize for group:*
  - *Kairos Theology is about “doing theology with the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other.”*
  - *This means that it includes a serious analysis of one’s context (social analysis), which includes attention to economic, political, and cultural factors, and paying attention to who is being harmed and who is benefitting from the harm (whether directly or indirectly).*
  - *As we continue our study, we are going to look closely at the way this is done in the Kairos USA document, and the way that it explicitly places itself within the tradition of doing Kairos theology.*

#### Kairos Palestine, Kairos USA and the Kairos “Legacy” (15 min)

- *How do the Kairos Palestine and Kairos USA documents relate to this “Kairos Legacy”?*
- *Distribute “**Handout 1.5: Kairos Legacy**” with quotations from Kairos Palestine and Kairos USA.*
- *Have people read quotations aloud, then discuss the questions on the handout.*

#### Closing (10 min)

- *Read Romans 13:11*: “Besides this, you know what KAIROS it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep.”
- For next week, we are going to discuss the specific context out of which Christian Palestinians are writing and to which Kairos USA is responding. In Kairos theology, this is called “reading the signs of the times:” the social analysis. As we prepare our readings for next week, we may be encountering new information. When the Bible talks about Kairos, it is sometimes associated with “waking up” and “being watchful”. If the documents we are studying are articulating a Kairos moment, what might we be asked to wake up from or wake up to?
- *Close in prayer.*

**Total estimated time = 115 minutes**



## Session Two: Reading the Signs of the Times

### Objectives:

- To review the current situation in Israel-Palestine, the “signs of the times” that the Kairos Palestine document articulates and the Kairos USA document affirms.
- To begin to explore the “signs of the times” in the U.S., particularly how economics, media and politics shape how we relate to the situation.

### Preparation:

- Before meeting, participants read Part I of Kairos USA.
- If the facilitator has chosen to use the Steadfast Hope curriculum, then participants should also read pp. 15-31 and 33 of Steadfast Hope.
- Secure a DVD player to screen excerpts from the Steadfast Hope (2011) DVD

### Welcome and Review (5 min)

- Open with a reading of Lk 12:54-57
  - “Jesus also said to the crowds, ‘When you see a cloud forming in the west, you immediately say, ‘It’s going to rain.’ And indeed it does. And when a south wind blows, you say, ‘A heat wave is coming,’ And it does. Hypocrites! You know how to interpret conditions on earth and in the sky. How is it that you don’t know how to interpret the present KAIROS? And why don’t you judge for yourselves what is just?”
- Review:
  - Kairos theology is a theological reflection on what is going on “on the ground” in one’s context, i.e. “reading the signs of the times.”
  - What are the “signs of the times” this document is reading?

### Reading the Signs of the Times in Palestine (65 min)

- Introduction:
  - The Kairos USA document is a response to the Kairos Palestine document. It thus deliberately uses the description of the signs of the times found in that document (*refer to Kairos Palestine, Section One, “The Reality on the Ground,” as well as the first part of Part I of Kairos USA, “Injustice in Palestine.”*)
  - For those who have not been there, it is difficult to grasp fully what is going on and why this is such an urgent issue. So, we are going to see some of what is going on “on the ground” through video.
- Screen Chapters 2, 3 and 8 of Steadfast Hope (46 min)
- After screening, discuss:
  - What words, phrases or images stood out to you (*list on the board or on flipchart*)?

- What questions does what you saw raise for you?
  - ...as a U.S. resident?
  - ...as a Christian?
- At the beginning of the Kairos USA document, the South African Kairos document is quoted:
  - “This is the KAIROS, the moment of grace and opportunity, the favorable time in which God issues a challenge to decisive action.”—“The Kairos Document: Challenge to the Church,” South Africa, 1985
  - If this is the current situation “on the ground,” why do you think the Palestinian Christians felt now was the moment of “grace and opportunity,” a “Kairos moment in which God issues a challenge to decisive action?”

Break (10 min)

Reading the Signs of the Times in the United States (30 min)

The Kairos USA document is a response to the Kairos Palestine document, in that it affirms and lifts up the Palestinian Christian reading of the signs of the times in their context. But Kairos USA is also responding to what is “on the ground” in the U.S. context, and the enormous significance of our context to the situation affecting Palestinians and Israelis.

- Let’s look at some of what is going on in our context now.
- *Show selections from chapters 4 & 5 of Steadfast Hope (20 minutes: show 42:30~52:00 in Chapter 4 and 54:41~1:03.53 in Chapter 5)*
- *After screening, discuss:*
  - What are some of the dynamics described in these video clips that affect how we in the U.S. relate to this conflict?
  - These clips deal briefly with some of the larger economic and political aspects of how the U.S. is involved in Israel/Palestine. How does this relate to us as individuals?
  - What are some other factors about our context that impact how we in the U.S. relate to this conflict? (this might include how we get our information through media sources, cultural affinities with Israel, political allegiances, etc.)

What is our Kairos moment? (7 min)

On page 6 of Kairos USA, it states:

“The focus of this Kairos initiative is on Israel and Palestine, reflecting the growing recognition of this longstanding and worsening human rights situation as an urgent challenge to our churches and our world today. At the same time, we are aware that this is only one of many issues facing us as we strive to follow the prophet Micah’s injunction to ‘do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God.’ It is our hope

and prayer that the wisdom and courage we bring forth in answering the call for justice in Israel and Palestine will strengthen and deepen our awareness of other ways in which our nation's political, economic and ethical actions must be brought into harmony with Jesus' call for a world in which all share in God's peace."

- In light of our reading of the "signs of the times" here in the U.S., why is it so important that we as US Christians pay attention to this particular issue of Israel-Palestine?
- At the same time, the Kairos USA document acknowledges that there are many aspects of injustice that US Christians seek to address. What are other examples of injustice or issues of concern that we can understand better or differently in light of our reflection on the way US governmental and ecclesial structures work in response to Israel-Palestine?
  - *Note: it works best to allow the group to make its own connections, but some connections you might suggest include:*
    - *Discrimination and civil rights*
    - *Tax money for weapons and prisons*
    - *Rights of indigenous peoples, or other groups that have been removed from their lands*
    - *Our military presence abroad, wars in the Middle East*
    - *The federal budget and the priorities it suggests*
    - *Immigration and the walled border between the U.S. and Mexico*
    - *Destruction of natural resources*

Closing Reflection (3 min)

- *Re-read Luke passage*
  - "Jesus also said to the crowds, 'When you see a cloud forming in the west, you immediately say, 'It's going to rain.' And indeed it does. And when a south wind blows, you say, 'A heat wave is coming,' And it does. Hypocrites! You know how to interpret conditions on earth and in the sky. How is it that you don't know how to interpret the present KAIROS? And why don't you judge for yourselves what is just?"
- What is at stake for us as Christians in "reading the signs of the times" here and elsewhere and responding to them?

**Total estimated time = 120 minutes**

## Session Three: Theology Matters

### Objectives:

- *To highlight the importance of responding to the specific ask of Palestinian Christians to “revisit” our theology as an essential piece in supporting peace with justice in the Holy Land.*
- *To gain a basic understanding of the often implicit theological assumptions that shape Christian attitudes towards Israel.*

### Preparation:

- *Participants should read in Kairos Palestine: Authors’ opening statement, Section 2.3-2.5, “Our land has a universal mission” and Section 6.1, “Our word to the Churches of the world”; Kairos USA: Part 2 and Steadfast Hope: pp. 12-14*
- *Facilitator should print out Handouts 3.1-3.3; Handouts 3.1 and 3.2 should have enough copies for everyone to read (perhaps 1 copy per 2 people); make enough copies of 3.3 for each participant to use.*

### Welcome (5 min)

- *Read Mark 1:14-15, 21-28:*

“After John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee announcing God’s good news, saying “Now is the KAIROS! Here comes God’s Kingdom! Change your hearts and lives, and trust that this is Good News!”

“Jesus and his followers went into Capernaum. Immediately on the Sabbath Jesus entered the synagogue and start teaching. The people were amazed by his teaching, for he was teaching them with authority, not like the legal experts. Suddenly, there in the synagogue, a person with an evil spirit screamed, ‘What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are. You are the holy one from God.’ ‘Silence!’ Jesus said, speaking harshly to the demon, ‘Come out of him!’ The unclean spirit shook him and screamed, then it came out. Everyone was shaken and questioned among themselves, ‘What’s this? A new teaching with authority! He commands unclean spirits and they obey him!’ Right away the news about him spread throughout the entire region of Galilee.”

### Introduction: Why this matters (15 min)

- Both the Kairos Palestine and Kairos USA documents spend significant time discussing Christian theology and the use of Scripture as critically important for Christians like us in the U.S. to study in relation to this conflict. Why?
- *Distribute “**Handout 3:1: Kairos Palestine and Kairos USA Theology**”*
  - *Read aloud these passages (may have participants take turns reading aloud).*
  - *Discuss:*
  - *Why does it matter what sort of theological assumptions we have?*
  - *Why does it matter how we interpret scripture?*

- Where have we seen, in our history and even today, the use of theology and scripture in ways that have harmed people?
- *Summary:*
  - What is at stake here is whether or not we are proclaiming a Gospel that is really Good News for all.
  - What is at stake here is whether or not we are living out a theology that matches what we say we believe. If we proclaim a theology that creates this much suffering and violence in another part of the world, are we really proclaiming what Christianity is about?

*Theologies that shape us today (30 min)*

- *Opening comments:* Having read in preparation pp.12-14 of Steadfast Hope, let's make sure we understand what these theologies are about.
- In a sense, deicide, supersessionism, and Christian responses to Holocaust theology on the one hand, and Christian Zionism on the other hand, are all Christian theologies that are wrestling with core questions about how Christians and Jews should relate: *(as a group, discuss some or all of these questions below, using the pages from Steadfast Hope as informational starting point)*
  - What to do about the fact that Jesus came and established a new covenant? How does that relate to the one established with Abraham and the ancient Israelites?
  - What to do about the fact that Christianity ended up becoming a separate religion from Judaism, and therefore in competition with it?
  - How to think about the role the Jewish people play in the Christian understanding of salvation?
  - In light of the history of Christian violence against the Jewish people, violence that was supported by our theologies and interpretation of Scripture, what do we need to reject from our tradition?
  - At the same time, what have we rejected or overlooked from our tradition that we need to reclaim as essential to understanding our faith?

*Break (10 min)*

*Theology and the Holy Land (30 min)*

All of these questions we've been exploring, which can be discussed and debated in the abstract, became urgently relevant once we focus in on the assumptions about claims to the "Holy Land." Who has a right to this land? How do you support this claim? Are these claims necessarily exclusive—that is, for one group of people only? The entire question of whether Jews, Christians, Muslims and others can share the Holy Land and live in peace turns on how we apply our theological and biblical understandings of God's will for this land to our current context.

- *Distribute "Handout 3.2: Christian Zionism and Replacement Theology." This will take you through the readings and discussion questions.*

### Reflection (25 min)

- *Make a transition to a more reflective space. This may mean moving into a circle of chairs if the group was not already in such a configuration. You may also choose to put in the circle a candle or other object that might mark the space as open to God's voice and to a spirit of communal support.*
- *Introduce:* We've looked at how certain theological assumptions impact how Christians view the current situation in Israel-Palestine. These (religious) assumptions shape – implicitly and explicitly – our country's political policy towards a secular nation state.
- *And while we can see that the theology matters on the scale of global politics, it also matters to us personally.*
- *Distribute "Handout 3.3: Personal Worksheet" and writing utensils.*
- *Explain:* Let's spend a few moments reflecting on how the challenges we've explored to these pervasive theological views also challenge us and our own theological perspectives.
- *Take a few moments to jot down your own thoughts in response to the following prompts. You will be invited to share from this later, but you do not have to. This is for you.*
- *After participants have had about 5-10 minutes to reflect and write, invite those who feel led to share something from what they have written. Introduce by stating that this is a time for people to simply name what they are wrestling with, not a time for engaging in debate or to try and answer others' questions. The facilitator might choose to use a talking piece or other tools for creating a space for people to name struggles and sit with them prayerfully and in support of each other, regardless of whether they agree with what others are struggling with.*

### Closing Prayer (5 min)

- *You might re-read the Mark 1 passages listed above.*

**Total estimated time = 120 minutes**

## Session Four: Interfaith Relations

### Objectives:

- *To provide a space for participants to explore the complex dynamics of Christian-Jewish relations*
- *To encourage participants to choose faithful, thoughtful action that takes into account these dynamics, but within a framework of a Christian witness willing to take some risks*
- *To make links between this dynamic and the rise of Islamophobia in the United States*
- *To encourage participants to seek partnerships with Jews and Muslims in this work*

### Preparation:

- *Participants should read the Introduction, Preamble and Section III of Kairos USA as homework, and also pp.5-6 of Steadfast Hope.*
- *Facilitator should print out and make copies of Handout 4.1, enough for each participant to read (perhaps 1 copy per 2 people).*

### Welcome (10 min)

- *Opening Scripture:*
- *Luke 6:20-36 (Blessings and Woes + Love for Enemies)*
  - *[key phrases] “Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man.” “Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.” “But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.” “If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you?”*
- *Quoting from the Kairos USA document, the facilitator can remind group that:*
  - *“The situation in Israel and Palestine is not a struggle among religions, as some would maintain, in which age-old enmities among Jews, Christians and Muslims fuel unending conflict and violence. It is, rather, about human rights and equality: about land, water and access to work, education and worship. At the same time, however, religious identity plays an important role in the ongoing conversation about Israel and Palestine in the United States, where “interfaith politics” has had a profound effect on political discourse and on the ability of the churches to take positive action.”*
- *Furthermore, the more we become involved in working on this issue, the more we find ourselves engaged in conversations about identity, both in terms of race and ethnicity and in terms of religious tradition.*
- *The dynamics are complex, and the goal today is for us to dive into this complexity in an attempt to understand some of the subtle, and not-so-*

subtle, assumptions and feelings that come into play when people talk about and act on this issue.

What is the “Ecumenical” or “Interfaith Deal”? (45 min)

- Distribute **“Handout 4.1”**, which includes the text to read together and the discussion questions.
- *Facilitator explains:* In the last session, we looked at the impact theology has had on Christian attitudes towards Israel. On page 12 of *Steadfast Hope*, Jewish theologian Marc Ellis describes the “ecumenical deal” as follows: (read from page 1 of handout).

Break (10 min)

*Take a break if appropriate, before you make the transition to the discussion of Christian-Muslim relations, which begins on page 3 of the handout.*

Making the link to Islamophobia (40 min)

- *Returning to the discussion using the handout:* In the final line of the paragraph we just read, mention is made that we must also include Muslims in these conversations. This transitions into the next section.
- *Have participants read the paragraphs in the handout, and continue with discussion questions.*

Reflecting on Scripture (15 min)

- *Lectio Divina on Genesis 12:1-3*
- *Transition to a more meditative set up – gather the group in circle, candle, assign 3 readers.*
- *Reader one reads through once. During this reading of the passage, listeners are instructed to simply listen to what words or images stand out for them or “shine”. After the reading, facilitator allows silence for a moment, then invites participants to simply name (don’t explain) what images or words stood out for them.*
- *After a silence, reader two reads through again. During this reading, participants are asked to listen to the passage for any new insights. What, in light of our discussion, might this passage be saying to you?*
- *After a silence, participants are invited to share (briefly) what insights they have received from this hearing of the word.*
- *Reader three reads through again. This time, participants are instructed to listen to the passage with the question in mind: “In hearing this Word, what am I called to do?”*
- *After a silence, participants are invited to share what they heard.*
- *Questions for further reflection (if they don’t come out in previous discussion):*



- In light of the fact that Jews, Muslims and Christians are all considered “children of Abraham,” how can we re-think what it means to “bless Abraham”?
- How can we re-think what it means to “curse Abraham”?
- Thinking back to the Luke 6 passage, how do we bring this into conversation with the call to “bless those that curse you”?

Closing (1 min)

- As you continue to ruminate on this passage and what we’ve discussed, read for next time Section Five, A Church Confession. What does it mean for us to confess and repent in this context?

**Total estimated time = 121 minutes**

## Session Five: A Church Confession

### Objectives:

- *To explore the concept of structural sin and violence, in order to understand theologically how we as U.S. Christians contribute to the suffering articulated in the Kairos Palestine and Kairos USA documents, and how we can contribute to making meaningful change.*

### Preparation:

- *Participants should read Kairos USA Section, part 2 “A Church Confession” in advance of the session.*
- *Facilitator should print out and copy Handout 5.1 (enough for all to read, e.g. 1 copy per 2 people); Print out Handout 5.2 and create 6 packets using additional materials from KUSA website (or use Handout 5.2 Sample); and choose a closing prayer or litany (Handouts 5.3 or 5.4 are examples and can be adapted).*

### Welcome and Opening Reflection (5 min)

- *Read the following, quoted in Kairos USA Preamble:*
  - *“The crisis is not only in our society. The crisis is in our churches... For the churches, too, this is a kairos moment in which we are called to conversion, our structures, values, habits and assumptions in need of basic transformation.”*  
— *“On the Way: From Kairos to Jubilee,” U.S. Kairos document, 1994*
- *If you would like to include scripture as well, here are some possible scripture passages. Because different communities read these passages differently, the facilitator should choose something that fits for his/her context. The aim is to begin reflection on “sin” and “confession” for structural violence and oppression.*
  - *1 John 1:5-10*
  - *Rom 8:12-17*
- *Today we are going to delve into the confessional aspect of this document, and use the theological concept of sin to understand our role as U.S. Christians in this ongoing situation.*

### Understanding Structural Sin (15 min)

- *Introduce the Concept of Structural Violence and Structural Sin*
  - *Distribute “Handout 5.1: The Machine”*
  - *Note to Facilitator: You can simply go over the text on the handout, but some further points might be helpful for you to consider as you explain this concept of “structural sin”:*
  - *Structural sin is a theological concept we can give to the fact that there are larger systems in place that we are caught up in, that can create*

harm or benefit on our behalf, whether we realize it and support it or not.

- Structural sin means that there are systems in place that create harm on our behalf, even if we don't agree with it.
- We may benefit from these systems, or we may be harmed ourselves by these systems.
- As part of these systems, we bear at least some responsibility for our participation in them. We bear this responsibility even if we are ignorant of our role. Once we become aware of our role, however, we bear a new level of responsibility.
- As part of these systems, **we also have the power to make changes, if we know how these systems work.** This is why it is important to understand how they work.

#### *A Church Confession: Part One (30 min)*

- *Have participants divide up into groups or pairs to focus on particular parts of the section titled "A Church Confession" (the second half of Part 1) (6 groups—if you have fewer than 12 participants, individuals can also work on this, or you can combine groups)*
- *Distribute packets to each group that includes the portion of the confession they are to study, plus additional materials that give examples of these sins in action (Use "**Handout 5.2: Small Group Confessions**" plus check [kairosusa.org](http://kairosusa.org) for additional materials).*
- *Each group then reads their portion of the confession statement, then looks over the short reading or fact sheet, and discusses the questions on the handout.*

#### *Break (10 min)*

*Announce to groups that they will be reporting back when they return from break.*

#### *A Church Confession: Part Two (40 min)*

- *Large group report back. Facilitator can write on board/flip chart what groups report back, or small groups can write up their answers on flip chart paper as they are working, and then bring to the front and present to the group.*
- *Discussion:*
  - Which of these do you have questions about or disagree with?
  - Which of these refer to something that you feel like you need more information about?
  - What does it mean for us as Christians to talk about these dynamics in terms of "sin" that we confess?
- *Closing thought: If we are parts of a "machine" that is creating harm on our behalf, we are complicit in this harm. The good news is, this also means we can change the way the machine operates by changing how we act within it!*

#### *Closing Litany (10 min)*

- *Facilitator: Please consult **Handouts 5.3 or 5.4** for some sample liturgies that you can use as a closing litany of confession. Or, you are welcome to create your own. **Total time = 110 minutes***

## Session Six: Call to Action

### Objectives

- *To understand what Palestinian Christians are calling on Western Christians to do.*
- *To explore nonviolence from a variety of perspectives, both practical and theological.*
- *To understand the difference context makes in nonviolent action; that is, Palestinian resistance “with love as its logic” as compared to nonviolent actions we can take here in the United States.*
- *To brainstorm a variety of ways in which US Christians, individuals and congregations, can respond to the Call to Action.*

### Preparation

- *Participants should read in advance Part 4, “Call to Action” and the conclusion, “A Time for Choices.”*
- *Facilitator should choose scripture passages, copy handouts, prepare packets of call to action resources, and gather stationary and envelopes for commitment reminders.*

### Welcome (5 min)

*The facilitator can choose any number of scripture readings that encourage reflection on actively loving neighbor and enemy, resisting evil, having hope, trusting in God, or the power of prayer. Some include:*

Psalm 85: (1-7) 8-13

Psalm 122:6-9

Micah 6:8

Matthew 25:31-46

Romans 8:12-17

Romans 8:18-39

Romans 12

James 2:14-20

James 3:13-18

Ephesians 6:10-17

### To What are We Being Called? (15 min)

- *Distribute or project onto screen the text of Section 6 of the Kairos Palestine document, “Our word to the Churches of the world.” This is “**Handout 6.1: To what are we being called?**”*
- *Have different students read each section aloud (3-4 readers).*
- *After reading, invite students to make a list of the specific “asks” that they heard the Palestinian Christians making of the Churches of the world.*

- *After creating list, discuss:*
  - Why are the Palestinian Christians asking for these specific actions from us?
  - Which have we already sought to do?
  - Which ones feel like challenges, and we may not be able to do or want to do? Why?
  - Which feel like invitations we are excited about doing?

What is “Loving Resistance” for us? (30 min)

- *Facilitator explains:*
- Citing Matthew 5:45-47, Rom 12:17, and I Pet 3:9, the Kairos Palestine authors in Section 4 offer an extensive reflection on what they call “Loving Resistance,” or “resistance with love as its logic.” They define it as such:
  - “Love is seeing the face of God in every human being. Every person is my brother or my sister. However, seeing the face of God in everyone does not mean accepting evil or aggression on their part. Rather, this love seeks to correct the evil and stop the aggression.” (4.2.1)
  - For them, this means engaging in nonviolent resistance to the Israeli Occupation, and they see this as a Christian duty.
- Citing Matthew 25:31-46, the authors of the Kairos USA document also call us to nonviolent action:
  - “It is a call to individuals, churches, schools, human rights organizations and interfaith partners to join with all who embrace nonviolent resistance to injustice. It is a call to listen to the same Spirit that inspired the Civil Rights movement in this country and the struggle to end Apartheid in South Africa. We issue this call in the absolute conviction that God calls us to compassion—to join the struggle for justice and equality in the spirit of Matthew 25.” (Introduction, p.4)
  - “In this way, we stand with Kairos movements throughout the world, lifting up the ideal of nonviolent resistance to injustice in accordance with the teachings of our faith.” (Preamble, p.5)
- What “loving resistance” looks like for our Palestinian brothers and sisters will be different than what it looks like for US, living here in the United States. So, before we discuss what it means for us to respond to the call using nonviolence and loving resistance, let’s look at what “nonviolence” is.
- *Distribute “Handout 6.2: Passages on Nonviolence.” Have small groups or partners read them together and try to identify the “key insight” about nonviolence the passage suggests.*
- *In large group, have groups report back one key insight about nonviolence from their passage. List on board.*
- *Discussion:*
  - Is there anything new or surprising you found in these passages?
  - Is there anything that particularly resonates with you or inspires you?

- Now, look at Exodus 1:15-21. (Shiphrah and Puah, the Hebrew Midwives). Read passage aloud.
  - In what ways are we like the midwives?
  - How are we different?
  - What other insights can we gain from reflecting on this passage?

Break (10 min)

What are we called to do in our context? (35 min)

- *Read aloud this passage from Kairos USA, page 11:*
  - “The favorable time is now—and the churches are called. It is clear that the political process has failed to bring about the changes that will result in a just and lasting peace in Israel and Palestine. We know that when politics fail to bring about the necessary changes in our laws, political systems and policies at home and abroad, social movements arise from the grassroots to inform and drive the process of change. We believe firmly that the churches are capable of leading the movement to bring peace to Israel and Palestine. The churches have done this before. We recall the pastors and theologians of the German Confessing Church who opposed Nazism with the publication of the Barmen Declaration of 1934. We lift up the courageous actions of religious leaders who transformed our own society in fundamental ways during the Civil Rights movement. The support of the global church for the South African Christians who stood against Apartheid was critical in bringing about the end of that racist system. Throughout modern history, the churches have called the faithful to respond to the cry of the poor, the dispossessed and the oppressed. Today, we summon our fellow U.S. Christians to heed this present call to action, in activities that include education, worship, political advocacy and nonviolent direct action on individual, local and denominational levels.”
- *Divide participants up into 7 groups, one for each of the specific topics listed in the Call to Action. Distribute to each group a packet that contains the text from the document (Handout 6.3: Call to Action Small Group”) as well as supporting materials that demonstrate possibilities for further work. A list of up-to-date resources are on the KUSA website, and some examples are included as “Handout 6.4: Call to Action Small Group Packet Sample”. Where applicable, resolutions or statements from that congregation’s denomination or church leaders related to these topics should be included. The groups will review resources as well as brainstorm their own, and discuss the questions on the worksheet.*
- *Have small groups report back in large group, listing their ideas on the board or flip-chart.*

- *Stepping back and reviewing the list, the facilitator can now suggest the following:*
- *Facilitator can use “Handout 6.5: Luke 10:27” as a visual if desired.*
- *What if we grouped them as follows:*
  - Heart—visits and partnerships
  - Soul—worship and prayer
  - Strength—BDS, political advocacy
  - Mind—education, doing theology
- *Read Luke 10:25-28, passage on loving God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength*
- *How could these actions be embodied as gestures of our love for God? (or, how can these actions be done to the Glory of God?)*

#### *Making our Commitments (5 min)*

- *Give each person a note card and ask him/her to write down one thing he/she will commit to doing in the next month.*
- *Give them envelopes to self-address and ask them to place cards in the envelope and place in basket on the way out. Explain that these will be sent to them as a reminder in 4 weeks.*

#### *Final Thoughts on Hope (5 min)*

- *Read Kairos Palestine statement on hope:*
  - “Hope within us means first and foremost our faith in God and secondly our expectation, despite everything, for a better future. Thirdly, it means not chasing after illusions – we realize that release is not close at hand. Hope is the capacity to see God in the midst of trouble, and to be co-workers with the Holy Spirit who is dwelling in us.”
- *Read from scripture:*
  - Romans 8:35-39
- *In the midst of their context, Palestinian Christians can find hope through their faith in God, and they cite Romans 8 as their inspiration.*
- *What will be our inspiration to do what we are called to do?*

#### *Close in prayer (5 min)*

#### *Evaluation Sheets (10 min)*

*Please have participants fill out evaluation sheets (“Handout 6.6”) and turn them in when they are finished. You might provide a large enveloped for them to insert them in rather than handing them to you directly. We also encourage you to fill out your own evaluation as a facilitator (“Handout 6.7”). The board members of Kairos USA would be grateful to receive copies of these evaluations, so that we can continue to improve this curriculum, and develop others from the future.*

**Total time = 110 min**