ICPJ IMAGINING EVENT

ON THE MIDDLE EAST

SEPTEMBER 14, 2006

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PARTICIPANT LIST

Abed, Wadad

Ahuvia, Aaron

Kaimowitz, Benita (Be)

McNamara, Toni

Stieber, Arnold

Warpehoski, Chuck

Ziegler, Tim

Yamamoto, David….Facilitator

ICPJ MISSION STATEMENT

*The Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice is a non-profit
Education/social action organization which brings together
People of various faiths who believe the world is one family.
We believe that love, commitment to future generations, wise
Stewardship of the environment and promotion of social,
Political and economic justice are religious responsibilities.*

ICPJ STEERING COMMITTEE TASK CHARGE

Background: At the May 2006 Board meeting, the "Imagine" process was started when the Board voted to "appoint a separate committee to propose other ways of organizing Middle East work", separate from the Mediation Committee."

Charge: This committee is charged by the Board with the following:
- Host a half day "Imagine" facilitated session to identify ways to engage on Middle East issues other than through the Middle East Task Force as it has been structured.   This encounter would bring together 6-12 people who can be nominated by any ICPJ member.
- We look for a committee that meets the following criteria (recognizing that not all members must meet all criteria):
  - Ties to various faith communities
  - Interests in Middle East from a diversity of perspectives
  - Familiarity with ICPJ
  - Willingness to work with ICPJ vision of promoting peace in the Middle East
- The Executive Committee will oversee nominating process, any ICPJ member can nominate people for the committee.
- The outcome of this process will go to the Steering Committee (SC) and then the membership meeting

Principles for Middle East Work (as adopted by board in August, 2005)

Interfaith needs to work to build constituencies, especially in the variety of religious communities that have a vital stake in this conflict: Jewish, Muslim, and Christian. This means reaching out to these communities on the basis of where they are starting from and helping facilitate their response to the conflict.

Interfaith needs to be empathetic to both Palestinians and Israelis and challenge those who demonize either, or demonize any of the faiths or perspectives involved in the conflict including Islam, Judaism, Christianity, and secularism.

We recognize that any peaceful solution to the conflicts in Israel/Palestine must be rooted in principles of justice, equality, and compassion. We will work for a peace that is based on internationally agreed upon principles that neither privilege, nor discriminate against, a particular people or nation. These are principles which will help mediate conflicts in other contexts and in the future.

ICPJ members will be sensitive to language and positions that are offensive to different religious traditions and ethnic groups, especially Jews and Muslims, in its Middle East work.

We recognize that many factors have contributed to the conflict in the Middle East. We recognize that ultimately if there is to be reconciliation between the two peoples that the narratives of the Jewish people and the Palestinian people must be heard, addressed, and ultimately reconciled. In addressing these narratives we will resist attempts to equate the enormity of the evil of the Holocaust with the dispossession of the Palestinian people. We will also resist the attempt to equate the enormity of the violence of the occupation with violence against the occupation. We will condemn all violence that is aimed at civilians, whether it is the deprivation of basic human rights, assassinations, or militant attacks. We also recognize the power difference between Israel and Palestine and believe that it must be taken into account as we do our work. We will work for a peace with justice that is rooted in human rights and self-determination for all.

ICPJ will work to create a framework for working for Peace and Justice in the Middle East that is welcoming to all wanting to work to end the occupation within our framework of respect and care for all. We will strive to find specific programs and language around which we can build an interfaith struggle for peace and justice in the Middle East.

We will continually strive to create and evaluate all our programming in terms of the degree to which it is helping build and expand the base of those working for Peace in the Middle East.

Participant Review of Survey (See Appendix A for Survey Results)

What did you see in the data?

- Frustration
- Lots of similarities
- A call to do something constructive
- To do work in the various religious communities
- Respect for religious and secular positions
- Tension between the survey responses of developing programs that will be effective and acceptable to the moderate-mainstream, and moral integrity to take unpopular positions

How did you react to the data?

- Hopeful
- People see possibilities to move forward
- Motivated
- Energized
- Sadness over the amount of negative comments
- Clarity about what happened in the past
- Uncertainty about what we do in moving forward

What are some of the implications you see from the data?

- There is energy to move forward
- People are unsure what to do and how to do it
- The task before this group is important and huge
- We need to mindful of differing perspectives while seeking common ground
- We must be inclusive of perspectives while keeping our work within context of ICPJ's mission
- We are aware of the importance of this work we are doing

Perspectives of the Middle East Task Force

Facilitator: *It is important in moving forward to look back and identify lessons learned. The following represents the Imagine Event participants' perspectives of the Middle East Task Force in areas that were positive and those that were negative.*

Positive Factors

- Strong commitment
- Provided a forum for sharing issues
- Brought issues to a more heightened awareness level that otherwise may not have received sufficient attention
- Took specific actions such as the humanitarian effort to the children in Iraq
- Conducted cultural activities
- Provided information
- Played an education function
- Gave hope when people got together

Negative Factors

- Lost sight of ICPJ's mission
- Focused on personal interests
- Negative energy…polarizing, value judgments of "good" and "bad"
- Weren't concerned with local alliances
- Some had their own agendas and didn't care for the group
- Moral absolutism
- People weren't interested in process

A PROPOSED MODEL TO DO THE WORK:

THE OLIVE BRANCH ALLIANCE

The Olive Branch Alliance is the response of the Imagine Event participants to the charge given to it by the ICPJ Steering Committee.

General Description:
The Olive Branch Alliance (henceforth referred to as the "Alliance")is the governing structure that will oversee the efforts in addressing areas of interest of the Middle East.   The Alliance will be a body of members who will do its work according to identified goals and formalized action plans.   It will identify key strategies to achieve its goals.   Areas of interests may be far ranging from addressing conflicts in the Middle East to celebratory events reflecting the inherent strengths found in the Middle East.   The activities identified as key strategies will be delegated to specific work groups that will develop and implement an action plan that has been approved by the Alliance.

Governance:
 The Olive Branch Alliance reports to and is accountable to the ICPJ Steering Committee.   The Steering Committee will oversee the Alliance's work to ensure the Alliance is:
  * Aligned with the ICPJ mission, principles and goals; and, is compliant with ICPJ by-laws and policies
  * Carrying out its functions through the establish of an approved annual action plan
  * Maintaining regular communication with the Steering Committee
  * Conducting appropriate fund raising activities to support its goals and key strategies

Additionally, the Steering Committee will:
  * Require written monthly reports from the Alliance on its activities
  * Approve any major shifts of direction by the Alliance
  * Approve the membership to the Olive Branch Alliance, including appointing and removing members
  * Require a membership term plan wherein there is a staggered two-year term of membership in the Alliance
  * Receive regular minutes of the Alliance's meetings

Duties and Functions:
  * Develops for Steering Committee approval an annual action plan which will include:
    o Identification of major goals for the year including identification of areas of interests
    o Key strategies for achieving the goals through formulation and implementation of an action plan
    o Means of monitoring progress and evaluating the results
  * Identifies and coordinates programs on specific areas of interest
  * Conducts or oversees fundraising activities to support its action plans
  * Assists in the creation of specific work groups in each area of interest that has been identified for action

The Imagine Group recognizes that in its first year of existence the Olive Branch Alliance needs to concentrate on establishing a firm and solid foundation. This foundational work involves the less glamorous tasks of getting organized, identifying its rules for operation, recruiting members and the like. The Alliance also may need to engage in a healing process given the transition from past Task Force to this new model..

The Imagine Group cautions against the temptation to move too rapidly into the addressing specific areas of interests and establishing specific work groups before it has organized itself.

Membership in the Olive Branch Alliance:

- Members will be appointed by the Steering Committee
- Members will serve a staggered two-year term
- Criteria for membership is based on a) identifying a core set of representations that will provide board perspectives to the Middle East; b) achieving an appropriate mix of perspectives and individuals rather than meeting an arbitrary target number of members. This mix involves, for example, members whose background reflect:
  - Religious diversity
    - Christians
    - Jews
    - Muslims
    - Other
  - Identity diversity
    - Palestinians
    - Iraqis
    - Israeli
    - Iranian
    - Other
  - Respected by and access to the mainstream in respective communities
  - Legitimacy in their respective communities
  - A history of collaboration and working with and across divergent groups
- Additional members include one ICPJ staff and one Steering Committee member
- Members of the Olive Branch Alliance will be expected to:
  - Function as an ambassador of their respective communities
  - Be good listeners and be adaptable
  - Provide leadership both in the Alliance and in their respective communities
  - Be current on the Middle East including possessing an understanding of history, culture and other factors influencing events

Structure of the Olive Branch Alliance
- Chairperson
  - Facilitate the meetings
  - Plan the agenda
  - Elected by the Alliance
- Secretary
  - Take and distribute minutes of the Alliance meeting

- Decisions of the Alliance shall be made by vote of which 60% of the members must approve the measure
    - There shall also be provisions for reconsideration of a measure that was acted upon.   This is to ensure that all implications of the action is considered
- Meetings
    - Meetings will held on a scheduled basis as determined by the Alliance
    - Meetings will be open to members of the Olive Branch Alliance only and invited guests

Key Elements for a Successful
Olive Branch Alliance

Facilitator: The following are identified elements that are considered important to the success of the Olive Branch Alliance when formed and becomes operational. These elements are not presented in any order of importance. If one could project himself/herself two years into the future and envision the Olive Branch Alliance is functioning successfully and fully, these elements below would be in place. (The highest rated elements in terms of priorities will be presented in the following section.)

- Group is inclusive
    - Religious
    - Members are of the mainstream of their respective communities
    - Members have strong and board ties within and between communities
    - Collaboration among the various communities in programs, activities, and geo-political understanding of the region
- Attention of the Alliance is on the entire Middle East region and not just on the Israel – Palestine question
    - Issues are viewed both in terms of a specific situation as well as within the context of the entire region
    - Other issues in the region are also a part of the Middle East focus such as Iran, Lebanon, Syria
    - There are specific work groups working on different topics, under the oversight of the Alliance
- ICPJ understands Middle East impact and implication to any situation
    - This includes an examination and understanding of U.S. policies and activities related to the Middle East
- There is interaction of the larger communities fostering understanding of other perspectives
    - Diversity of perspectives are dealt with by the seeking common ground driving the Alliance to carry out its purpose
    - Various constituencies are involved in the carrying out of the various programs
    - Intergenerational involvement characterizes involvement and participation
    - Congregational involvement characterizes involvement and participation
    - The Alliance to recognizes the importance of understanding the countries and cultures that make up the Middle East region. One method the Alliance can utilize is the development of a matrix that defines quantifiable demographics
- The processes developed by the Alliance are fair and thoughtful and does not allow one group to take over the agenda and the Alliance's processes
- There are resources for the Alliance to do its work including
    - Fundraising
    - People involvement from the various communities

- Different communities are excited about the programs offered, as well as generating programs that are:
    - Informational/educational
    - Celebratory
    - Humanitarian efforts
- The Alliance's efforts are characterized by a strong interfaith component by
    - Working with religious/spiritual communities in worship, gatherings, collaboration in programming
    - Congregational development
    - Seeking invitations from religious communities to make connections with one another

Identification of Priorities: Where to get Started

Facilitator: After the Imagining Group identified the essential elements to success, the group prioritized the elements in terms of where to start by a means of a stars/check system.   In so doing, it is recognized that all of these elements are interrelated and that each must be recognized as an integral part of the Alliance.   It is part of good planning to focus on getting started the "right way" rather than trying to do everything at once. Thus, this activity is significant to identify where the Alliance needs to focus its time and energies in the initial phase of development.

 Each participant was given the opportunity to "vote" their top priority element by placing a star aside the element.   Additionally, each participant was also given three check marks that could be placed on other items that would indicate their next three most important elements.   The following represents the outcome of the selection process.

Stars	Checks	Element
3	1	The Olive Branch Alliance must be inclusive taking into account religious perspectives, the mainstream perspective of the communities and strong ties that are strong, broad and deep between these communities
1	5	Attention by the Alliance must be on the entire Middle East region and not just on issue; but on different issues
1	2	There must be a balance between diversity of perspectives and common finding common ground where views may be shared and respected
1	2	Process must be developed that will be fair and thoughtful which also will not allow one group to take over the agenda and the Alliance's processes
1	0	It will be helpful to develop some type of method of quantifying characteristics of countries and cultures in the Middle East such as the development of a matrix
0	4	The Alliance must have an interfaith orientation and interacting with the various religious communities, including congregational development
0	3	The Alliance recognizes the importance of collaboration among the various local communities
0	2	The Alliance needs to observe programs and events that are celebratory in nature recognizing the many strengths of the various cultures/countries in Middle East that will foster understanding, involvement and participation

Next Steps

Item	Target Date
• Draft report from David to Chuck	9/19
• Chuck to forward report to the group	9/19
• Group to give feedback to Chuck	9/22
• Final report from David to Chuck	9/25
• Membership Meeting (as many members of the group asked to attend)	9/28 7 p.m.
• Steering Committee to act on the report	10/10 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Conclusion

The Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice (ICPJ) Steering Committee sought an alternative delivery model to the Middle East Task Force, which the Council suspended. The individuals (Imagine Group) who worked on the alternative delivery met and formulated a structure and some basic processes.

In so doing, the Imagine Group recognizes the tensions caused by the many circumstances surrounding the Middle East Task Force. It is the hope of this group that a solution can be found that is a win-win both the members of the Task Force and Steering Committee. From the Imagine Group's perspective it is difficult to imagine a situation where there will be two bodies-the suspended Middle East Task Force and the Olive Branch Alliance-co-existing under the oversight of the ICPJ Steering Committee. The Imagine Group is concerned that there not be two separate groups addressing the Middle East region under the umbrella of the Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice.

The Imagine Group in its work in creating a new model took the lessons learned from the past. There are four basic concepts that serve as driving force that built the foundation of the newly created model:

- The work of the Alliance is grounded in the mission of ICPJ
- The work of the Alliance is regional in perspective and not solely committed to one issue
- Collaboration, particularly among the various faith/spiritual communities, is a core value
- The Alliance is established to oversee programs that reflect the wide range of interests characterized in the Middle East

Imagine Group Post Event Evaluation

1. What are the highlights of this session for you?
   - We got our work done

2. What were the lowpoints of this session for you?
   - None

3. Were your expectations met?   Please explain
   - Yes

1. What concerns do you have as you leave this session?
   - I just hope the actual group works

5. How would you rate this session?   Please circle one

   1   2   3   4   5
poor fair average good excellent

1

Facilitator's Comments

I want to thank the Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice for providing me with opportunity to work with the organization and the impressive collection of individuals that comprised the Imagine Group. I was so impressed by the sophistication of the individuals in terms of knowledge of the issues, understanding of the intricacies of the many dynamics, and their deep commitment to peace, justice and reconciliation.

I am impressed by the model that was created. It is a model that can have a significant and positive impact in our community. There are specific areas when considering this new model that I particularly feel compelled to note to the staff and steering committee of ICPJ.

The model is only as good as its leaders and participants. I have no doubt that it will be a daunting task to find individuals who would be willing to commit the kind of time and energy that will be necessary to successfully implement the proposed model. I do not know the forces that will influence the implementation of the model; however, I recommend that ICPJ seriously consider applying for some type of funding that will support the hiring of someone to help get this model up and running successfully.

It is my experience that good intentions often translate to premature implementation. I would caution against rushing into implementation. Careful planning and thoughtful action will-in the long run-increase the chances of a successfully implementation.

The challenge for ICPJ to initiate this new model rests, in my view, on two critical factors: The first, I have discussed in recruiting individuals who will carry out the spirit that founded The Olive Branch Alliance. The second, the engagement in a healing process that will allow everyone to move forward in a positive and supportive fashion in making the Alliance work successfully.

Lastly, I recommend that key staff, steering committee and other key individuals participate in a workshop on goal setting and action planning. It is critical that everyone involved has a common vocabulary, understand in the same way the concepts and practices in goal setting and action planning, and are able to either assist in the development or the review of these two practices.

Again, thank you for this opportunity to work with you.

Best wishes,

David H. Yamamoto, Facilitator

APPENDIX A

Summary of the Survey

Survey Summary of the Participants for the Middle East Imagining Event

1. What do you think is the charge that the steering committee has given this group?

- *Develop a program for addressing Middle East conflict*
- *Develop programs addressing local conflicts around the Middle East*
- *Develop programs that lives up to ICPJ's values as an interfaith group that is pro-peace*
- *Set up another group that is interfaith in nature working for peace in the Middle East*
- *Develop programs that will be effective and acceptable to the moderate-mainstream*
- *Promote healthy interfaith relationships here at home*
- *Forming interfaith, peaceful, empathetic insightful discussions on solutions to peace in the Middle East that reflect ICPJ's mission and vision*
- *Develop a strategy for constructive engagement of the Ann Arbor community about the Isaeli-Palenstine conflict*

2. What do you perceive to be the reasons for your invitation to participate in this group?
- *I am a respective member of my community*
- *I've spoken and written about peace and justice*
- *I am on the periphery of ICPJ and was not involved in the dissolving of the Middle East Task Force*
- *I am an activist in the community and I get along with others*
- *I am a staff person*

3. What must happen from this event in order that you feel your time was spent well?
- *To promote understanding and compassion for the other...not to recruit people to join the cause of hating or fighting the other*
- *An active faith life response in the interfaith communities; short and long range goals should be formulated, planned and carried out*
- *Open dialogue and implementation of a structure to keep it open utilizing a 4-step process: 1) state problem; list possible causes; 4) list possible solutions; select best possible solution*
- *4 outcomes: 1) clear and honest analysis of the current situation in our community including opportunities and challenges; 2) moral integrity to take unpopular positions that are grounded in our mission; 3) develop strategy for articulating our positions and involving various communities; 4) this initiative is integrated with other ICPJ initiatives and programs*
- *Either develop a framework for positive, pro-peace, interfaith work relating to the Middle East; or, realize that such an agreement is not possible*

4. What concerns do you have as you begin this process?
- *We will fail*
- *There are already entrenched and polarized local situation that will harden and make for fewer opportunities for collaborative work based on common ground and mutual respect*
- *We will not have the moral courage to pursue paths that may create discomfort within communities*
- *There be a structure to ensure input vs. preaching, and that all voices are heard*
- *People have lost faith in any process and have become apathetic*
- *The group will have an anti-Israel bias*

5. What has made you proud about the Middle East efforts by the ICPJ?
- *ICPJ has taken steps to distance itself from people protesting at Beth Israel*
- *Clarification of the issues and reaching out into the community to build awareness*
- *They don't give up*
- *Are willing to try new approaches*
- *They understand the need to turn to the "affected" communities for guidance and consultation*
- *Commitment of so many people to struggle with a difficult issue*

6. What has made you sorry about the Middle East efforts by the ICPJ?
- *The rancor, divisiveness and we sometimes fail to be interfaith and to be peace*
- *They haven't been effective*
- *Allowed the "radical" elements to run wild for too long*
- *Timid in the face of the "high decibels" from the Jewish and Palestinian communities*
- *Factions trying to control output*
- *Individuals on and around the ME task force were not able to work peacefully together*
- *The group should have acted much sooner, and in much more decisive terms, to stop the hate mongering outside of Beth Israel*
- *Parts of the group have taken such anti-Israel positions that even the more progressive elements of the Jewish community couldn't feel comfortable in ICPJ*

7. What issue/issues should the "Middle East Program" that is to be developed focus its energy on?
- *I'd like to find a way of combining I/P issues and local relations*
- *Would like to see ICPJ active on Iraq; but not necessarily from this group*
- *Everything must be brought to the table otherwise the focus may be in danger of missing pertinent facts which would impede peaceful discussion/clarification*
- *Peace and justice for ALL people*
- *The question of Palestine is at the heart of the Israel/Palestine question*
- *How the I?P issue contributes to the anger in the Arab and Muslim world*
- *The real story behind America's war on "terrorism"*
- *So many options such as:*
    1. *Public education discussing the "dual narratives of Palestinians and Israelis*
    2. *Shared social service project such as raising money to support replanting of Olive Trees in the west bank or supporting hospitals in the region*
    3. *Common ground advocacy...identify areas of common ground and actively promote them to public and to policy makers*
    4. *Local community building/conflict de-escalation*

8. Do you believe that the focus of the Middle East Program should have a spiritual and/or secular/political orientation

- *This is a solid basis for the work of the program*
- *The program should honor the religious traditions that are present in ICPJ*
- *I think it should be both*
- *There must be some spiritual orientation (in the board sense) but not political*
- *Important to have both. It is part of the IC PJ mission and vision statement*
- *As an interfaith group we'd have a special ability to work on a spiritual level*

APPENDIX B

Imagining Event Agenda, 0/14/2006

ICPJ Imaging Event

Agenda   9/14/2006   6 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Purpose: To establish a structure whereby ICPJ, consistent with its mission statement,
can address issues in the Middle East

Desired Outcomes:
  Participants will:
- Understand ICPJ mission statement
- Establish a recommended structure for addressing issues arising from the Middle East
- Identify next steps

5:30 (30)   Begin gathering

6:00 (10)   Welcome and Expectations   Chuck

6:10 (15)   Introductions   All
*Name
*Affiliation
*Interest in the Middle East

6:25 (10)   Review Mission and Vision of ICPJ   Chuck   handout mission
and charge from Steering Committee   statement

                                                                 handout steering
                                                                 committee charge

6:25 (10)   Review Agenda, Purpose and Outcomes   David   handout

6:35 (5)   Review survey data   All   handout survey
summary

6:40 (15)   Group discussion-Call out   David   easel/newsprint
*What did we see in the data
*How did I react to the data
*What are the implications

6:55 (20)   What are the key elements that must be   David   easel/newsprint
part of a structure?

7:15 (30)   Small group   Small group newsprint
*each group will work on 1-2 key elements

7:45 (10)   BREAK

7:55 (40)   Report out and discussion   All   newsprint

8:35 (15)   Small group to refine its initial work   Small group

8:50 (20)	Report out and reach consensus	All	newsprint

9:10 (20)   Identify next steps   David/Chuck
             *membership meeting
             *steering committee
             *what will happen to the work of this group
             *presentation
             *role of this group

9:30 (10)   Debrief   All

9:40 (5)   Evaluation

9:45   ADJOURNMENT