Ecumenicism Across Divides: Building Consensus on Middle East Policies

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As a multi-denominational faith-based organization, Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) must daily navigate the complexities of reaching a consensus on policies from its 27 constituent members, which come from Eastern Orthodox, Catholic, Mainline Protestant, and Evangelical traditions. Each of these churches and organizations has its own distinct theology, approach to ministry, political views, and on-the-ground presence in the Middle East. Given the complex and contentious issues surrounding U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, CMEP’s approach offers valuable insights into finding commonality on relevant issues affecting individuals and organizations with widely divergent opinions.

CMEP’s work in the Middle East is guided by a set of 13 policy positions the language of which is unanimously agreed upon by all 27 members. These positions cover a range of issues from achieving a lasting, comprehensive peace in Israel/Palestine, to the sustainability of Christian communities in the Middle East, to humanitarian and human rights concerns. All stances taken on contemporary political issues must tie into one or more of these policy positions. CMEP’s response to the Trump Administration’s decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel offers a prime example of how CMEP was able to use its carefully crafted policy positions to articulate a stance on one of the most controversial subjects among American Christians today. This and other such cases
demonstrate a successful model that other organizations can seek to emulate.