

Offering of Letters for Ceasefire Toolkit

Goal: For congregations in NYC to use their voices for peace by writing and gathering letters to our elected officials to tell them that, as Christians, we call for a permanent and immediate ceasefire in Gaza, an end to the blockade of Gaza, and for all hostages to be returned.

Together, let's send 100 letters to our representatives.

Context: It has been six months since October 7, 2023. Since that time, 1,100 Israelis were killed in the attacks by Hamas, 250 Israelis were kidnapped, and over 32,000 Palestinians have been killed by Israel, thousands more injured, and the psychological impact of this violence on everyone is incalculable.

As Christians in the United States continue to celebrate this Easter season, we practice resurrection by calling for life where there continues to be so much death. It is our faith in the Risen One that compels us to call for an end to the genocide, an end to US funding of this genocide, an exchange of all hostages, and an end to the blockade of humanitarian aid to Gaza.

In this Easter season, we are seeing that public pressure on Biden and our elected representatives is working. After pressure from Biden, more aid trucks are entering Gaza and Israel is withdrawing some troops from Gaza. We celebrate these steps and we keep pushing for an end to US funding of the genocide in Gaza. Now is a crucial moment to maintain pressure on our elected officials.

When: Between now and May 12 include an "offering of letters" during or after a weekly worship service; mail the letters before May 13 or send a delegation to deliver the letters in person.

How: Use the attached letter and invite your congregants to sign this letter during a service or after (i.e. during Coffee Hour). If you use it during the service, you could pray specifically for Gaza and then invite people to put that prayer into action by signing this letter and giving it as an offering. You can gather the letters in offering plates, bags, or by inviting people to come forward and place the letters on a table.

You can invite people to fold the letters or have volunteers fold the letters and address the envelopes.

To find out who your representative is and their address:

<https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>

You can invite people to send letters to the Representative of the church's address and/or their own representative (if different from the church's).

Delivering the letters: You can mail your letters or hand deliver them to your representatives office during the week of May 13.

Want support and ideas about how to incorporate this into worship? Join a Zoom meeting on Wednesday, April 17 or May 1 at 12:00 p.m., hosted by Rev. Mira Sawlani-Joyner (The Riverside Church) and Rev. Emily Brewer (Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church). [RSVP here.](#)

Let us know you're participating! If your congregation is planning to participate or has already participated, let us know [here!](#) We will also use this list to coordinate with anyone who wants to hand deliver letters together in May.

Take pictures - As we continue to call upon our representatives to uphold the sanctity of life and take other actions, we get courage from each other, knowing we're not alone. So share pictures of your offering of letters, of folks addressing envelopes, of delivering the letters, etc. and tag @Christiansforafreepalestine and @christiansforliberation or use the hashtag #NYCChristiansforCeasefire

Sample Prayer, Written by Rev Thorne

God of Life,
who loves all people beyond what we can imagine,
we confess that we have made a mess of things.
In our pain and particularity,
in our certainty and conceit,
we have harmed and destroyed your image in our siblings.

We have stood by silently,
used dehumanizing words,
failed to acknowledge the suffering of others,
told stories that maintained only our point of view,
looked away when we needed to pay attention.
Show us the way out,
the way forward,
the way back,
the way that leads to life.

Six months of captivity.
Six months of terror.
Six months of protesting and praying
chanting and challenging.
Many more years of carnage.
My God, we are bone weary and heart heavy.
We dream a world with space for
a permanent and lasting ceasefire in Gaza,
a permanent and lasting peace in the land we call holy.

We mourn the loss of every one of your precious children.

We pray your healing and holding for everyone who weeps.
We pray safety and protection for everyone in harm's way.
We pray for the imaginative gift of vision
that gives all your people
deep breaths and fresh possibilities.

We pray for those with power
to protect those who have none.
We pray for those with food
to feed those who have none.
We pray for those with faith
to live the best of their traditions out loud.
We pray for life.
We pray for life.
We pray for life.

Hear our prayers for resurrection
in the midst of this Good Friday world,
for we ask in the powerful name of the Risen Christ. Amen.

Written by Reverend Adriene Thorne
Senior Minister and Child of God
The Riverside Church of the City of New York

Letter

Please feel free to adapt this letter for your congregation's context and culture as needed. You may also want to adapt this letter based on whether or not your representative is Christian (i.e. you might use more scripture or Christian language if you all share the Christian faith in common).

Dear Representative _____,

I write to you as a member of *YOUR CONGREGATION'S NAME* in your district. Today in our worship, we prayed for an end to the violence in Gaza, an end to the blockade of aid, and a release of all hostages. Now, I write to you to put that prayer into action.

As a person of faith, I mourn the 1,100 Israelis killed on October 7th, and I mourn the over 32,000 Palestinians who have been killed by the Israeli military since then. The indiscriminate murder of Palestinian civilians is an atrocity funded by US tax dollars.

Just a few weeks ago, Christians around the world celebrated Easter, a day when we proclaim that life is stronger than death, and so we practice our faith by calling for life in places where death is so prevalent. We cannot be silent when bombs paid for by the US continue to fall, when so much more humanitarian aid – medical supplies, food, and more – is needed, when starvation continues to be used as a weapon of war, when there are still Palestinians and Israelis who are being held hostage, apart from their families.

As our representative, I call upon you to act with your conscience and do everything in your power to put an end to this violence: demand a permanent and immediate ceasefire, an end to the ongoing blockade imposed by Israel on humanitarian aid into Gaza, and for all hostages to be returned.

Yes, we must keep sending aid, but no amount of humanitarian aid will be enough until the violence stops and all hostages are released.

I urge you to make a public, unequivocal statement in support of a permanent ceasefire. Millions of lives depend on it and many of your constituents are waiting to support you in this.

Sincerely,

