



TEN
 COMMANDMENTS
 of
 INTERRELIGIOUS
 DIALOGUE
 on
ISRAEL

[I]
Be there
 at every meeting. Woody Allen reminds us that showing up is 80% of life.

[II]
Don't try to defend
 the indefensible regarding a specific Israeli action or policy. Criticizing Israel when appropriate can be an asset because it shows a confidence in the Jewish state's ability to take necessary corrective actions. At the same time, Jews should demand that Christians hold the Palestinians to the same high moral standards and behavior as they do Israelis.

THE UNDERSTANDING WE NEED BEGINS WITH HISTORY. The mainline Protestant church bodies—the American (Northern) Baptist, United Church of Christ (Congregational), Disciples of Christ, Episcopal, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, United Methodist, and Presbyterian Church USA—are products of the 16th-century Protestant Reformation in Europe, shaped theologically by the teachings of such Reformers as Martin Luther of Germany and John Calvin of France. Their shared name, “mainline,” harkens back to the 19th century, when their “tall steeple” churches were sited along the Pennsylvania Railroad’s “mainline” tracks near Philadelphia.

While differences do exist among these bodies—liturgically, Lutherans and Episcopalians have more formal worship services than American Baptists, for example—mainline churches generally affirm liberal, moderate religious beliefs that emphasize social justice and accept biblical interpretations based upon critical/academic Scriptural study. Most mainline Protestants do not share three key theological positions that define evangelicals: a belief in the literal truth of the Bible, a personal “born again” experience or encounter with Jesus, and the religious imperative to seek the conversion of all peoples to Christianity.

In short, mainline Protestant perspectives on social justice issues (civil rights, *Roe v. Wade*, gay rights, gun control, and immigration reform, etc.) and on religious issues (mandated prayers and Bible reading in public schools, legally defining the United States as a “Christian Nation,” etc.) mirror those of the majority of Jews. Indeed, a robust mainline Protestant–Jewish coalition, including the Union for Reform Judaism, is working to uphold church/state separation, religious liberty, and voting rights, as well as to ensure affordable housing and healthcare for all Americans, among other issues.

Moreover, in recent years several mainline churches have publicly acknowledged Christian

culpability for the Holocaust and sought a new constructive relationship with Jews and Judaism based upon “mutual respect and knowledge.” In 1987, the United Church of Christ General Synod, the UCC’s highest policy body, adopted a statement affirming: “The Christian Church has throughout much of its history denied God’s continuing covenantal relationship with the Jewish people... This denial has led to outright rejection of the Jewish people... and intolerable violence... Faced with this history which we as Christians cannot, and must not, disassociate ourselves, we ask for God’s forgiveness.” Similarly, in 1996, the United Methodist General Conference, the denomination’s top legislative authority, passed a resolution stating, “While church tradition has taught that Judaism has been superseded by Christianity as the ‘new Israel,’ we do not believe that earlier covenantal relationships have been invalidated or that God has abandoned Jewish partners in covenant. We believe that just as God is steadfastly faithful to the biblical covenant in Jesus Christ, likewise

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