



It is with deep sadness that we bring the news of the death of Kevin Bray, longtime advocate for peace and justice in Palestine and Israel. As we gather various voices in this tribute to Kevin, we offer you a *snapshot* of Kevin, the person, the activist, the worker, the modern-day Christian with a sense of call.

Kevin championed particularly the cause of the Palestinian people until the moment he entered final care. He was writing letters and statements drawing attention to the plight of besieged and bombed Gaza and its people.

Gregor Henderson, former President of the Uniting Church in Australia, has had a long association and friendship with Kevin in the Canberra setting where they have both lived. They were both involved in the formation of the Ecumenical Working Group on Palestine and Israel, PIEN's predecessor organisation. Gregor writes:

Kevin had a passionate faith in the God of justice and peace and love, a wide and deep intellect, an enormous spirit of compassion and generosity, a love of life and a joy in living, a determination to contribute to a better world, an unflinching courage to confront injustice and wrong, integrity by the bucket-load, a superb marriage, and heaps of friends and admirers. A beautiful person, full of faith and hope and love.

Ros Harper, also there with Kevin and Gregor as the Ecumenical Working Group in Canberra and beyond grew, continues:

Kevin and Gwenyth visited Palestine and Israel in the early 2000s. They spent time volunteering with a Church related charity in Nazareth. This experience and the exposure to the challenges Palestinians face, combined with a commitment to the gospel message of peace and justice led to many years of advocating for Palestinians with the Australian people and Government.

In the spirit of ecumenism, Kevin co-founded the Ecumenical Working Group in 2005. Kevin was later a Convenor and then Treasurer for many years.

Kevin applied his post graduate qualification in International Law when writing briefs, submissions and letters as well as speaking with Parliamentarians and diplomats. This is a lesson to us all to know the facts and use an evidence-based approach in our advocacy.

Kevin drafted a National Council of Churches resolution that was passed in 2009 calling for recognition and Palestinian statehood alongside Israel, be that in two states or one.

He wrote many letters to Parliamentarians and was well known to readers of The Canberra Times through his excellent letters. He drafted numerous submissions to Parliamentary inquiries related to Palestine, human rights, and humanitarian and development aid.

Kevin knew how government worked from his long years as a senior Australian Public Servant. His career included a stint as an Australian Government representative to the United Nations (Food and Agriculture Organisation) in Rome.

He was able to use his knowledge and skills to arrange many meetings with Parliamentarians, through persistence and understanding protocol. At these meetings he was the consummate professional; always

polite and diplomatic but unafraid to present the facts and push for a change in Australia's position on Palestine.

Kevin's commitment to ecumenism was deeply grounded in his faithful commitment to his own denomination. Kevin was a lifelong member of the Churches of Christ and a stalwart of the Ainslie congregation. He did much to grow the awareness of the Churches of Christ about the situation in Palestine and Israel. Kevin was the Churches of Christ representative to the ACT Churches Council for many years, including as Treasurer.

Kevin and Gwenyth provided hospitality for many supporters of Palestine in their Canberra home. We were able to gather, enjoy a nice meal and build community as we planned activities to promote our advocacy. There is a long list of Church leaders, Christian lay people, Muslims, Jews and secular activists who have gathered together there.

Gwenyth accompanied Kevin in his work and continues her advocacy for Palestine. And as Kevin pointed out in the month before he passed, "Gwenyth takes excellent care of me", a tribute to the loving relationship they shared.

As I finish writing this, I couldn't help thinking that I wish I had Kevin to edit it for me. He was such a powerful and effective writer.

Doug Hewitt is a peace activist who has worked on the PIEN Committee with Kevin for many years and alongside him in other settings. Doug adds:

Kevin was also a compassionate advocate for ecumenism through the ACT Churches Council and built lasting relationships with so many who valued his wise counsel. We will miss his contribution to PIEN in prompting us to act if we were slow to respond to injustice. In peace...

Helen Rainger, current President of PIEN, was welcomed to the Palestine Israel Ecumenical Network by Kevin in 2015. She was struck by his command of detail and willingness to burn the midnight oil in working on the many written pieces described above. He seemed tireless. And to add one small anecdote:

Kevin and I have joined together in various visits and deputations to politicians, DFAT officials and church leaders in recent years. I recall many moments where the truth of our message seemed to be being heard, though at some times more than others. On one visit to two Foreign Affairs parliamentary staffers, what these two seemed most impressed with was this:

*Dr Bray, in what area did you receive your PhD? Response: Nuclear physics. This was no lightweight.*

PIEN Vice-President Dr Ray Williamson offers these words:

I knew Kevin for many years, first in ecumenical circles, as he was a strong ecumenist, but most particularly through his advocacy for the Palestinian people, for whom he had a deep passion. His death on All Saints' Day brought to a close the life of one of the saints: he was a faithful, committed Christian, and inspired by the gospel, he was an active advocate for peace and justice for all people. He will be greatly missed.

The PIEN committee will be forever thankful for the dedication and commitment Kevin showed and will miss him dearly. Rest in peace Kevin, you have loved and served the Lord and the people of the Holy Land, leaving a significant legacy. PIEN won't be the same without you.