

United Methodist Resolutions Related to Israel and Palestine

The overall goal of this study of Israel-Palestine is help the people of The United Methodist Church wrestle with the dilemmas, realities, injustices, fears, dreams, and visions of the two peoples of the three faiths who call the land where Jesus walked home.

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75. HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY (YOM HASHOAH)

In recent years, Jewish communities have developed the custom of remembering the Holocaust (Shoah) on the Jewish calendar at a designated time each year. This observance has become a powerful means of educating people about this historical atrocity and sensitizing them to present and potential violence rooted in racial hatred.

WHEREAS, “In the twentieth century there is particular shame in the failure of most of the church to challenge the policies of governments that were responsible for the unspeakable atrocities of the Holocaust” (“Building New Bridges in Hope,” Book of Resolutions 1996);

WHEREAS, as the same document observes, “[t]he Christian Church has a profound obligation to correct historical and theological teachings that have led to false and pejorative perceptions of Judaism and contributed to persecution and hatred of Jews”; and

WHEREAS, we are currently (May 2000) remembering the 55th anniversary of the end of World War II;

Therefore, be it resolved, that the 2000 General Conference calls The United Methodist Church to contrition and repentance of its complicity in “the long history of persecution of the Jewish people” and asks the General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns to give special programmatic emphasis to Holocaust awareness and to prepare resources for use in local congregations, annual conferences, and their Conference Commissions on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns or equivalent structures to enable them to become more aware of the Holocaust and its impact, and

Be it further resolved, as a sign of our contrition and our solidarity with the Jewish community, the General Conference urges the promotion of observance of Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Memorial Day, each spring in United Methodist local congregations and urges the General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns, in cooperation with other agencies of The United Methodist Church, in a time of increasing anti-Semitism, to work with our own denominations’ history with regard to this tragedy and find ways to support the work against anti-Semitism in the world today and to prepare resources for local congregations to observe Yom HaShoah.

We continue to pray for God’s grace to speak in Jesus’ name against bigotry, hatred, genocide, or other crimes against humanity whenever we encounter them.

ADOPTED 2000

See “Social Principles,” ¶ 162, *The Book of Resolutions, 2004*. Used by permission.

292. HOLY LAND TOURS

Concern has been raised across the church about special opportunities that are often being missed by United Methodists traveling to Israel/Palestine, often called the Holy Land. Christians indigenous to the area have also sharpened the question by wondering why they are so often ignored by Christian pilgrims to the region. Why, they ask, do travelers tend to honor the inanimate stones that testify to Jesus' life and ministry while ignoring the "living stones," the indigenous Christians who represent an unbroken line of discipleship to Jesus in the land that he called home?

Travelers to this land have the opportunity to be ambassadors of unity and concern to the churches and Christians in a troubled land. They also have an opportunity to learn from the spiritual traditions of the churches indigenous to the Middle East. Further, they have a special opportunity to discover firsthand the realities of a region of deep meaning and vital importance to Christians, as well as to Jews and Muslims,

Therefore, The United Methodist Church:

1. strongly affirms the resolution of the 1984 General Conference, offering "encouragement of all leaders of and participants in 'Holy Land tours' to contact indigenous Christian leaders in the Middle East, and to hear the concerns of both the Israelis and Palestinians who live there, as well as visit the biblical and historical sites" ("The Arab-Israeli Conflict," *The Book of Resolutions, 1984*, page 280);
2. asks the bishops, clergy, members, agencies, and congregations of The United Methodist Church, as they plan visits to the Holy Land, to devote at least 20 percent of the program time to contact with indigenous Christian leaders and to hearing the concerns of Palestinians and Israelis on the current crisis of Palestinian self-determination;
3. recommends that United Methodists planning individual or group tours to Israel/Palestine consult with the United Methodist liaison in Jerusalem and the Middle East Council of Churches Ecumenical Travel Office to seek opportunities to worship with indigenous Christian congregations and to visit United Methodist-supported mission sites;
4. asks the General Board of Global Ministries and the General Board of Church and Society to prepare specific recommendations for United Methodists traveling in the Middle East and other sensitive regions of the world;
5. recommends that United Methodist-sponsored tours use the denomination's joint seminar program in pre-departure seminars for the travelers;
6. urges that travelers use, as advance study materials, positions adopted by General Conference and by general church agencies relating to the Middle East;
7. extends sincere appreciation to those United Methodists who have facilitated the implementation of the above recommendations in tours they have sponsored or participated in during the first quadrennium following adoption of this resolution;

8. expresses deep concern that many tours sponsored or arranged by United Methodist bishops, pastors, and laity do not schedule opportunity for all participants to enter into partnership with the indigenous Christians for the recommended program time and, therefore, fail to “Walk With the Living Stones” in their strides toward Palestinian self-determination, their rich spiritual heritage, and their faithful contemporary witness;

9. expresses deep concern that evidence continues to accumulate that Christianity is dying in the land of Jesus through economic, social, and political pressures, which have greatly diminished the numbers and percentage of Christians in the Holy Land. United Methodist bishops and other organizers of Holy Land tours have a special responsibility to adhere to these recommendations to strengthen the witness of the remaining Palestinian disciples of the Living Lord;

10. affirms the presence of The United Methodist Church in Jerusalem through our liaison office;

11. encourages tour leaders to consult with the United Methodist liaison office in Jerusalem in order to facilitate adherence to these recommendations;

12. instructs the Joint Panel on International Affairs of our general agencies to monitor and report to the General Conference regarding the implementation of this resolution;

13. underscores the significance of Bethlehem 2000, which celebrated two millennia of Christianity in the land of Jesus;

14. urges close cooperation with the Middle East Council of Churches and other indigenous Christian groups to facilitate informed, alternative travel opportunities to the region; and

15. commends the General Board of Global Ministries for initiating visits to the Bible lands that explore issues of justice and peace among all participants in the region, with special emphasis upon the concerns of our Palestinian Christian colleagues.

ADOPTED 1992

AMENDED AND READOPTED 1996

AMENDED AND READOPTED 2000

See “Social Principles,” ¶ 165A, B, and D, *The Book of Resolutions, 2004*. Used by permission.

312. OPPOSITION TO ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS IN PALESTINIAN LAND

We join with Palestinian Christians as well as our Jewish and Muslim brothers and sisters in feeling a deep sense of rootedness to the land that has special meaning for our three religious traditions. We celebrate the diversity of religious customs and traditions throughout the Middle East.

Jerusalem is sacred to all the children of Abraham: Jews, Muslims, and Christians. We have a vision of a shared Jerusalem as a city of peace and reconciliation, where indigenous Palestinians and Israelis can live as neighbors and, along with visitors and tourists, have access to holy sites and exercise freedom of religious expression. The peaceful resolution of Jerusalem's status is crucial to the success of the whole process of making a just and lasting peace between Palestinians and Israelis.

We seek for all people in the region an end to military occupation, freedom from violence, and full respect for the human rights of all under international law.

WHEREAS, the prophet Isaiah cautioned against coveting the lands and homes of one's neighbors: "Ah, you who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is room for no one but you, and you are left to live alone in the midst of the land!" (Isaiah 5:8); and

WHEREAS, the continuing confiscation of Palestinian land for construction of settlements and the building of a separation wall violates basic understanding of human rights, subverts the peace process, destroys the hope of both Israelis and Palestinians who are working for and longing for peace, and fosters a sense of desperation that can only lead to further violence; and

WHEREAS, continued and often intensified closures, curfews, dehumanizing check points, home demolitions, uprooted trees, bulldozed fields, and confiscation of Palestinian land and water by the government of Israel have devastated economic infrastructure and development in the West Bank and Gaza, have caused a massive deterioration of the living standards of all Palestinians...and an increasing sense of hopelessness and frustration; and

WHEREAS, targeted assassinations, suicide bombings, and attacks against civilians by both Israelis and Palestinians heighten the fear and suffering of all; and

WHEREAS, people in the United States, through their taxes, provide several billion dollars in economic and military assistance to the State of Israel each year, which allows for the building of bypass roads and settlements that are illegal according to the Fourth Geneva Convention;

WHEREAS, the church continues to work with ecumenical and interfaith bodies to advocate for Palestinian self-determination and an end to Israeli occupation; to affirm Israel's right to exist within secure borders; to affirm the right of return for Palestinian refugees under international law; to call for region-wide disarmament; to urge Israelis and Palestinians to stop human rights violations and attacks on civilians, such as targeted assassinations and suicide bombings; and to urge the U.S. government to initiate an arms embargo on the entire Middle East region;

Therefore, be it resolved, that The United Methodist Church opposes continued military occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem, the confiscation of Palestinian land and water resources, the destruction of Palestinian homes, the continued building of illegal Jewish settlements, and any vision of a "Greater Israel" that includes the occupied territories and the whole of Jerusalem and its surroundings.

Be it further resolved, that we urge the U.S. government to end all military aid to the region, and second to redistribute the large amount of aid now given to Israel and Egypt; to support economic development efforts of nongovernmental organizations throughout the region, including religious institutions, human rights groups, labor unions, and professional groups within Palestinian communities.

The United Methodist Church requests that the government of the United States, working in cooperation with the United Nations and other nations, urge the state of Israel to:

1. cease the confiscation of Palestinian lands and water for any reason;
2. cease the building of new, or expansion of existing, settlements and/or bypass roads in the occupied territories including East Jerusalem;
3. lift the closures and curfews on all Palestinian towns by completely withdrawing Israeli military forces to the Green Line (the 1948 ceasefire line between Israel and the West Bank);
4. dismantle that segment of the Wall of Separation constructed since May 2002 that is not being built on the Green Line but on Palestinian land that is separating Palestinian farmers from their fields.

We also urge the Palestinian Authority and all Palestinian religious leaders to continue to publicly condemn violence against Israeli civilians and to use nonviolent acts of disobedience to resist the occupation and the illegal settlements.

We urge all United Methodists in the U.S. to:

1. advocate with the U.S. administration and Congress to implement the above steps;
2. encourage members of each congregation to study the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from all perspectives by inviting speakers to church events, reading books, using audio-visual resources in educational forums, and getting information from Web sites.
3. provide financial support to the Palestinian people through contributions to the General Board of Global Ministries;
4. support, and participate in, the work of international peace and human rights organizations to provide protection for Palestinians and Israelis seeking nonviolently to end the occupation; and
5. reach out to local synagogues, mosques, and Christian faith groups by engaging in interfaith and ecumenical dialogue on how to promote justice and peace in the Holy Land; and

That the General Board of Global Ministries, working together with the General Board of Church & Society and interfaith organizations, develop advocacy packets for use in local congregations to promote a just and lasting peace and human rights for all in the region.

ADOPTED 2004

See "Social Principles," ¶ 165, *The Book of Resolutions, 2004*. Used by permission.

323. UNITED NATIONS RESOLUTIONS ON THE ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT

WHEREAS, negotiations between the State of Israel and the Palestinian National Authority still have not achieved a just and lasting peace for the Palestinian people; and

WHEREAS, the United Nations Security Council has passed numerous resolutions, including Resolutions 242 and 338, that outline a framework for a just and lasting peace; and

WHEREAS, the UMC recognizes and affirms the role of the United Nations in the resolution of this conflict and has already affirmed that the “principles embodied in United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 provide an agreed upon formula to achieve security and peace for all states in the area” (see “The Current Arab-Israeli Crisis”),

Therefore, be it resolved, that The United Methodist Church calls upon the United States, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, to accept the authority of Security Council resolutions and abide by Resolutions 242 and 338, as well as all other relevant Security Council resolutions, that provide a framework for bringing this conflict to a just and permanent end.

ADOPTED 2000

See “Social Principles,” ¶ 165A, B, C, and D, *The Book of Resolutions, 2004*.
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