

“We Are Overjoyed!”

“The Lord has done great things for us, and we rejoiced”

Psalm 126:3



Michigan Conference
United Church of Christ
2015 Annual Meeting

Friday, October 23, 2015

First Park Congregational Church
10 East Park Place, NE
Grand Rapids, MI

Saturday, October 24, 2015

L.V. Eberhard Center
301 Fulton St. West
Grand Rapids, MI

1 **Calling the City of Grand Rapids, Michigan to Divest from and Declare a**
2 **Moratorium On Doing Business with Companies Profiting From or**
3 **Complicit In the Ongoing Conflict Between the State of Israel and the**
4 **Palestinian People.**
5

6 Submitted by

7 Susan Newsom, Christian Bileth, Rev. Dr. William M. Lyons

8 (delegates-St. John's UCC/Grand Rapids)

9 Bethany Winn, Dan Spaulding, Rev. Doug Van Doren

10 (delegates-Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ)

11
12 **Summary**

13 This resolution calls upon the City of Grand Rapids, Michigan, to divest any direct or substantive
14 indirect holdings or contracts, and to declare a moratorium on acquiring new holdings in or
15 entering new contracts with companies profiting from or complicit in human rights violations
16 arising from the occupation of the Palestinian Territories by the State of Israel until such time as
17 these companies no longer profit from or are complicit in said human rights violations, affirms
18 the campaign to that end organized by Healing Children of Conflict, denounces the use of
19 violence as a means to resolving the conflict between the Palestinian people and the State of
20 Israel, recognizes that the Jewish people and Judaism are not synonymous with the State of Israel
21 or its policies, commits the Michigan Conference to ongoing interfaith dialogue and relationships
22 in the effort to end this conflict peacefully, and calls up all members/churches in the conference
23 to implement locally the General Synod resolution titled [A Call for the United Church of Christ](#)
24 [to Take Actions Toward a Just Peace in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.](#)

25 **Biblical/Theological Rationale**

26 "The psalmist celebrates, "How good it is when brothers and sisters dwell together in
27 unity." (Psalm 133) Yet today the Middle East is torn by disunity between Semitic
28 brothers and sisters separated by "dividing walls of hostility." (Ephesians 2:14) We hear
29 the call of the prophet Micah, "And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice,
30 and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8) - and we are
31 reminded that we must conduct ourselves with kindness and humility even as we seek to
32 counteract injustice anywhere and to stand in solidarity with its victims everywhere.

33 "As disciples of Jesus, we hear and seek to heed his call to be peacemakers: responding to
34 violence with non-violence and extending love to all. In the words of the Kairos Palestine
35 document, "True Christian theology is a theology of love and solidarity with the

A Proposed Resolution of Witness

36 oppressed, a call to justice and equality among peoples.” (Kairos Palestine 2009 –“A
37 Moment of Truth”)¹

38 Historically this resolution grows from the seeds of more than 20 General Synod and Executive
39 Council actions speaking to a just peace between the Palestinian people and the State of Israel.²
40 It is an incarnation of what we mean by proclaiming that the United Church of Christ is a just
41 peace church.³ Further, this resolution seeks to embody the covenantal theology we proclaim as a
42 church by advocating for the common good by lending our voice to the organized work of others
43 from various faith traditions who are striving for the same goal: a peaceful resolution to the
44 conflict between the Palestinian people and the State of Israel.⁴ This resolution affirms HCC's
45 campaign.

46 Delivery of this resolution of witness to the City of Grand Rapids bears witness to the words of
47 God from Isaiah:

48 Ah, you who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is room for no one
49 but you, and you are left to live alone in the midst of the land! ⁹The Lord of hosts has
50 sworn in my hearing: Surely many houses shall be desolate, large and beautiful houses,
51 without inhabitant. ¹⁰For ten acres of vineyard shall yield but one bath, and a homer of
52 seed shall yield a mere ephah.⁵

53
54 Ah, you who make iniquitous decrees, who write oppressive statutes, ²to turn aside the
55 needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right, that widows may be
56 your spoil, and that you may make the orphans your prey! ³What will you do on the day
57 of punishment, in the calamity that will come from far away? To whom will you flee for
58 help, and where will you leave your wealth, ⁴so as not to crouch among the prisoners or

¹ <http://uccfiles.com/pdf/GS30-A-CALL-FOR-THE-UNITED-CHURCH-OF-CHRIST-TO-TAKE-ACTIONS-TOWARD-A-JUST-PEACE-IN-THE-ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN-CONFLICT.pdf>

² [1967 General Synod Resolution: On the Middle East Situation](#), [1969 General Synod Resolution: On the Middle East situation](#), [1971 General Synod Resolution: The Middle East](#), [1973 Executive Council Resolution: Middle East Situation](#), [1979 General Synod Action: Communication to Presidents Sadat, Begin, and Carter](#), [1979 General Synod Resolution: Overture on Consultation on the Future of the City of Jerusalem](#), [1987 General Synod Resolution: The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict](#), [1989 General Synod Resolution: On the Middle East](#), [1991 General Synod Resolution: Consequences of the Persian Gulf War for a Just Peace Church](#), [1991 General Synod Resolution: Support for the Men and Women of our Armed Forces](#), [1993 General Synod Resolution: Urging Reopening of East Jerusalem](#), [1997 General Synod Resolution: Jerusalem City of Life](#), [1997 General Synod Resolution: Palestine/Israel](#), [1999 General Synod Resolution: Bringing Justice and Peace to The Middle East](#), [2003 General Synod Resolution: An Alternative Voice to Christian Zionism](#), [2005 General Synod Resolution: Concerning Use of Economic Leverage in Promoting Peace in the Middle East](#), [2005 General Synod Resolution: Tear Down the Wall](#), [2007 Executive Council action on referred resolution “In Support of a Renewed and Balanced Study and Response to the Conflict Between Palestine and Israel”](#), [2013 Executive Council action on reports of implementation of 2005 “Economic Leverage” resolution](#), [A Call for the United Church of Christ to Take Actions Toward a Just Peace in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict](#)

³ http://www.ucc.org/justice_just-peace

⁴ [A Call for the United Church of Christ to Take Actions Toward a Just Peace in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict](#)

⁵ *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. (1989). (Is 5:8–10). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

A Proposed Resolution of Witness

59 fall among the slain? For all this his anger has not turned away; his hand is stretched out
60 still.⁶

61 The words of this resolution are intended to be one more weight on the scales of justice tipping it
62 toward peace between the Palestinian people and the State of Israel, a prophetic endeavor. They
63 will also encourage our sisters and brothers working in the Kairos Palestine movement⁷ (Heb.
64 10:24) and who are suffering under the weight of what many people, including Archbishop
65 Desmond Tutu, have called "apartheid"⁸ (Heb. 13:13), as well as to our sisters and brothers who
66 have already endorsed the HCC campaign. Finally this resolution affirms and expands our
67 relationships and points of dialogue with Jewish, Muslim, and Christian neighbors. (Ecc. 4:9-12)

68

⁶ *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. (1989). (Is 10:1–4). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

⁷ <http://www.kairospalestine.ps/>

⁸ <http://mondoweiss.net/2015/06/endorse-divestment-unconscionable>

69 **Background Information**

70 "The modern State of Israel is a political rather than a theological entity, birthed through the
71 imposition of partition by international structures and enforced by unsanctioned violence. As
72 such, Israel's responsibilities toward its citizens and neighbors are duties defined by international
73 law and its own claims to democratic principles. During nearly twenty years of partition and an
74 ensuing half a century of occupation, those duties have been ignored and those principles
75 mocked by a pattern of behavior designed to privilege Israel at the expense of its Arab and
76 Palestinian citizens and neighbors. While this has been defended as a response to violent
77 aggression, often it has reflected little more than the brazen exercise of power to extend control
78 over the land and its people for the sake of possession.

79 "While the modern State of Israel is not a theological construct, it has been justified by many on
80 the basis of theological claims grounded in an ancient narrative of promise, by others in a
81 contemporary interpretation of an apocalyptic narrative of the end times, and by still others as a
82 moral response to the centuries' long narrative of persecution of Jews that found its most
83 devastating expression in the Holocaust. As a result, Israel has taken on for many a quasi-
84 religious and moral character that often distorts history, corrupts the meaning of ancient texts,
85 and legitimizes oppression and suffering in ways that bear little or no relationship to the ethical
86 principles of either Judaism or Christianity."⁹ This distortion inflames public opinion and makes
87 difficult a distinction taken for granted when speaking about our own State. While Americans
88 can critique politicians' or the the American States' policies without being accused of being anti-
89 American, Americans who offer critiques of Israeli politicians or the Israeli State's policies are
90 often accused wrongfully of being anti-Semitic.

91 Since the publication in 2009 of "*A Moment of Truth, A Word of Faith, Hope and Love from the*
92 *Heart of Palestinian Suffering*" by Christian Palestinian leaders, the American Church, including
93 the United Church of Christ has been more attentive to the plight and cries of the Palestinian
94 people, Christians and Muslims alike. "The United Church of Christ acknowledges a preferential
95 option for those who live under military occupation, who face daily discrimination and
96 oppression, and who experience in their bodies a suffering only they can know. In its recognition
97 of *Kairos Palestine* the United Church of Christ seeks to demonstrate its respect for and its
98 commitment to Christian partners who have sought our accompaniment as well as our witness to
99 justice on their behalf."¹⁰ Among the actions to which *Kairos Palestine* calls churches is "to
100 engage in divestment and in an economic and commercial boycott of everything produced by the
101 occupation."¹¹

102 Healing Children of Conflict (HCC), a Grand Rapids, Michigan organization that "heals families
103 and communities by facilitating medical treatment for children seriously wounded in conflicts

⁹ <http://www.uccpalestineisraelnetwork.org/Theological-Statement.html>

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ <http://www.kairospalestine.ps/sites/default/files/English.pdf>

A Proposed Resolution of Witness

104 involving the United States, and thereby educates others about the root causes of those conflicts
105 [and] advocate for these children more generally, raising awareness and hope that helps
106 strengthen our own community and creates new networks for social justice." HCC has launched
107 a campaign calling on the City of Grand Rapids, Michigan, to divest its contract and holdings
108 with companies profiting from or complicit in the ongoing conflict between the State of Israel
109 and the Palestinian People, an effort that mirrors the values and goals of the United Church of
110 Christ General Synod Resolution entitled [A Call for the United Church of Christ to Take Actions](#)
111 [Toward a Just Peace in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict](#).

A Proposed Resolution of Witness

112 **Text of the Motion**

113 WHEREAS the United Church of Christ has a long history of General Synod and other executive
114 actions embodying its commitment to being a Just Peace Church (GS 15[1985]), affirming
115 Israel's right to exist within secure and internationally recognized boundaries (GS 16[1987]; GS
116 18[191]), asserting the rights of Palestinians to enjoy sovereignty in an independent, contiguous,
117 and viable state within secure and recognizable boundaries (GS 16[1987]; GS 17[1989]; GS
118 18[1991]); and

119 WHEREAS the United Church of Christ is deeply committed to interfaith relationships, having
120 confessed to and renounced the sin of anti-Semitism (GS 23[2001]), and denouncing actions
121 against Islam or Muslims based on ignorance or fear (GS 28[2011]); and

122 WHEREAS past United Church of Christ General Synods have identified the Israeli occupation
123 of Palestinian lands and its human rights abuses committed therein as a major source of conflict,
124 and have called for the end of both construction and expansion of settlements (GS 18[1991] and
125 GS 21[1997]) while recognizing the complexity of the conflict and that it has caused suffering
126 for both Palestinians and Israelis (GS 30[2015]); and

127 WHEREAS the Thirtieth General Synod of the United Church of Christ has called upon United
128 Church of Christ churches and church members to study thoughtfully the Kairos Palestine
129 document, as well as other perspectives on the occupied Palestinian territories, to reflect upon the
130 theological truths within the Kairos Palestine document, and, in solidarity with the Palestinian
131 people suffering under occupation, to take heed of its call for non-violent measures pressuring
132 the State of Israel to end the occupation; and

133 WHEREAS the Thirtieth General Synod of the United Church of Christ has called upon
134 conferences, local churches, members, and other related United Church of Christ entities to
135 divest any direct or substantive indirect holdings in companies profiting from or complicit in
136 human rights violations arising from the occupation of the Palestinian Territories by the State of
137 Israel until such time as these companies no longer profit from or are complicit in said human
138 rights violations; and

139 WHEREAS, Healing Children of Conflict promotes family and community healing by
140 facilitating medical treatment for children seriously wounded in conflicts involving the United
141 States, and has embarked on a mission advocating just peace between Israel and the Palestinians
142 through non-violent, economic intervention in occupied Palestinian territories,

143 THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Michigan Conference United Church of Christ:

144 CALLS upon the city of Grand Rapids, Michigan, to divest any direct or substantive indirect
145 holdings or contracts, and to declare a moratorium on acquiring holdings or entering contracts,
146 with companies profiting from or complicit in human rights violations arising from the

A Proposed Resolution of Witness

147 occupation of the Palestinian Territories by the State of Israel until such time as these companies
148 no longer profit from or are complicit in said human rights violations;

149 AFFIRMS Healing Children of Conflict in their campaign which calls upon the City of Grand
150 Rapids, Michigan, to divest any direct or substantive indirect holdings or contracts, and to
151 declare a moratorium on acquiring holdings or entering contracts, with companies profiting from
152 or complicit in human rights violations arising from the occupation of the Palestinian Territories
153 by the State of Israel until such time as these companies no longer profit from or are complicit in
154 said human rights violations; and

155 DENOUNCES all persons supporting and/or perpetrating violence as a means to solving the
156 ongoing conflict between the Palestinian people and the State of Israel;

157 RECOGNIZES AND AFFIRMS that Judaism and the Jewish people are different from the State
158 of Israel and its policies and actions, and in no way condemns Judaism or the Jewish people;

159 COMMITS itself to ongoing, interfaith dialogue and relationships with all parties or persons
160 working peacefully to end the ongoing conflict between the State of Israel and the Palestinian
161 people.

162 CALLS upon its members to study the basis for this resolution, and to take similar action in their
163 own communities that moves toward full implementation of General Synod resolution "[A Call
164 for the United Church of Christ to Take Actions Toward a Just Peace in the Israeli-Palestinian
165 Conflict](#)" adopted by the Thirtieth General Synod of the United Church of Christ.

166 **Funding**

167 Minimal funding is required for implementation of this resolution. The funding for
168 implementation of this resolution will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the
169 affected conference entities and the funds available.

170 **Implementation**

171 The Prophetic Integrity Mission Area Team and Conference Staff will determine a plan for
172 including this resolution in the public witness of the Michigan Conference United Church of
173 Christ. Each local congregation will determine how this resolution may best be utilized as a part
174 of its public witness.