

March 27, 2015

Sisters and Brothers in our United Church of Christ,



In June 2015, thousands from across the country (and abroad) will gather for General Synod 30 in Cleveland, Ohio — the birthplace of the United Church of Christ. Together, delegates and friends will discern resolutions of witness, church structure, and function. They will stand up for issues that demand a faithful witness. And they will join together in worship each day to lift up the Stillspeaking God. As members and friends of Peace United Church of Christ in Santa Cruz, we celebrate our shared life in the Body of Christ and commit ourselves to the denomination's vital witness in the world.

One resolution seems particularly timely and important to us. It's presented to General Synod 30 by the Central Atlantic Conference and endorsed by the New York, Connecticut and Central Pacific conferences. It builds on resolutions passed in 2013 by the Northern California Nevada Conference. This resolution, entitled "A Call for the United Church of Christ to Take Actions Toward a Just Peace in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," calls on United Church of Christ entities "to divest any holdings in companies profiting from the occupation of the Palestinian Territories by the state of Israel, including, but not limited to, Caterpillar Inc., Motorola Solutions, Hewlett-Packard Development Company LP, Group 4 Securicor, and Veolia Environment and its subsidiaries."

It further calls on all members, churches and entities of the church "to boycott goods identified as produced in or using the facilities of illegal settlements, located in the occupied Palestinian territories, including, but not limited to, Ahava skin care products, SodaStream products, and Hadiklaim dates; and upon church members to join boycotts of such goods in their local communities."

We support these specific calls and the thoughtful and prophetic work of the United Church of Christ Palestine-Israel Network; and we urge sister congregations and delegates to General Synod 30 to do the same.

In prayer and hope, we offer these reasons for our support:

A. We are moved by the urgent appeal of Palestinian Christian leaders in "Kairos Palestine 2009: A Moment of Truth." With these brave leaders, we believe that "true Christian theology is a theology of love and solidarity with the oppressed, a call to justice and equality among peoples." Through our own relationships and travel in the region, we have heard Palestinian leaders calling for support for targeted divestment and selective boycotts. This same call is sounded in "Kairos Palestine 2009":

*Therefore, we call for a response to what the civil and religious institutions have proposed, as mentioned earlier: the beginning of a system of economic sanctions and boycott to be applied against Israel. We repeat once again that this is not revenge but rather a serious action in order to reach a just and definitive peace that will put an end to Israeli occupation of Palestinian and other Arab territories and will guarantee security and peace for all.*

We seek to express solidarity and love in advocating for thoughtful, coordinated and nonviolent action in our own denomination. Within the Body of Christ, we are compelled to act for justice and peace.

B. We are likewise committed to friendship and collaboration with Jewish communities and allies. We are determined to identify and call out anti-Semitism wherever it exists. And we deplore bigotry in all its forms. The question before us is how to be faithful and responsive to Palestinian Christians, Palestinian Muslims and

Jewish allies in equal measure. For this, we turn to the traditions of Jesus and the consistent biblical ethic of justice and liberation. We resist the suggestion that divestment is, in itself, an anti-Semitic strategy. To the contrary, we believe, with many Israelis and Palestinians, that a nonviolent economic strategy honors Israel's past and strengthens its future. The goal is stability for both Israel and Palestine, side by side, thriving in partnership and liberty.

C. We perceive in 2015 something akin to Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "fierce urgency of now." The 2014 war in Gaza, coupled with ongoing and illegal occupation efforts in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, have continued to destabilize Israel and Palestine and deepen distrust and animosity. In our travels and evolving relationships in the region, we have heard a recurring call—from Israeli activists, Palestinian leaders, grieving parents on all sides, young peace advocates, and older ones too—for coordinated global action, consistent with nonviolent practice and loving concern for all.

D. We continue to urge all parties to practice loving-kindness, mutual respect, justice, and peaceful resistance in the face of occupation and violence. We believe that the UCCPIN resolution, as outlined above, is fully consistent with nonviolent values and practice. This tradition stretches back to Gandhi and King and reaches into more recent efforts to promote democracy in South Africa as well. The targeted divestment from companies with a proven record of profiting from occupation is a consistently nonviolent campaign—one that resists violence, cruelty, and terror and pursues peaceful ends through peaceful means.

We recognize the painful divisions that so often emerge in this important work. We're especially aware of strained relationships between progressive Jews and progressive Christians around these issues. We urge congregations and delegates to move forward with open hearts and profound humility. This is a time, however, for courage and action. As Dr. King once said, there is "such a thing as being too late" in the urgent movement for justice and peace. We fear that Israel and Palestine edge closer and closer to that dangerous line. Despair and poverty begin to limit possibilities for peaceful collaboration and problem-solving. Fear turns brother against brother, sister against sister.

We believe that our United Church of Christ can and must take an important step and express solidarity with peacemaking allies. We hear the call of Micah in the Hebrew Bible: "What does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" And we heed Jesus' own call to practice peace and reconciliation and risk our own comfort for the common good.

For all these reasons, we urge our sister congregations in the United Church of Christ and delegates to General Synod 30 to fully support "A CALL FOR THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST TO TAKE ACTIONS TOWARD A JUST PEACE IN THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT." We offer our time and energy to those who might appreciate conversation around these matters.

The time has come. The time is now. Let us act together in love.

Yours in the Body of Christ,

Peter Klotz-Chamberlin  
Mary Male  
Rev. David Grishaw-Jones  
Jim Weller  
Suzanne McLean  
Carol Trabing  
Doug Owen  
Ken Thomas

C. Stoney Brook  
Sue Robinson  
Natalie Blackburn  
Robert Valiente-Neighbours  
Jimiliz Valiente-Neighbours  
Valerie Friend  
Lindy Edstrom  
Jeanne Shada

Wayne Shada  
David Furnish  
Allison Purdie  
Lonna Speer  
Eileen Hamilton  
Lori Rivera  
Lisa Hoelsing  
Darlene Wilcox

Kathy Fahl  
Carol Roberts  
Caryl Williamson  
Catherine Sarto  
Stewart Jenkins  
Beverly Brook  
Jeanne Faulkner  
Maureen Rosner

Trudy Bush  
John Hall  
Lee Daher  
Tom Wages  
Sandy Schuller  
Jean Newman

Mary Lois Comesky  
Mike Fitzgerald  
Roger Erickson  
Candace Tanner  
George Sanderson  
Lote Sanderson

Nancy Walker  
Russell Walker  
Joyce Nicholson  
Celice Clevenger  
Carol Ann Aldrich  
Anne Rogers

John Newman  
Bill Walton  
Brooke Graff  
Sylvia Previtali  
Arnold Gregorian  
Pamela Roby

See the full text of the resolution at <http://synod.uccpages.org/resolutions/index.htm>

#### NOTES:

1. KAIROS PALESTINE 2009: A MOMENT OF TRUTH includes the following inscription from signatories:

We, the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem, hear the cry of hope that our children have launched in these difficult times that we still experience in this Holy Land. We support them and stand by them in their faith, their hope, their love and their vision for the future. We also support the call to all our faithful as well as to the Israeli and Palestinian Leaders, to the International Community and to the World Churches, in order to accelerate the achievement of justice, peace and reconciliation in this Holy Land. We ask God to bless all our children by giving them more power in order to contribute effectively in establishing and developing their community, while making it a community of love, trust, justice and peace.

His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III, Greek Orthodox  
His Beatitude Patriarch Fouad Twal, Latin Church  
His Beatitude Patriarch Torkom Manougian, Armenian Orthodox  
Very Revd Father Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Custody of the Holy Land  
H.E. Archbishop Dr Anba Abraham, Coptic  
H.E. Archbishop Mar Swerios Malki Murad, Syrian Orthodox  
H.E. Archbishop Paul Nabil Sayah, Maronite  
H.E. Archbishop Abba Mathaios, Ethiopian  
H.E. Archbishop Joseph-Jules Zerey, Greek Catholic  
Bishop Gregor Peter Malki, Syrian Catholic  
Bishop Munib A. Younan, Lutheran  
Bishop Suheil Dawani, Anglican Bishop Raphael Minassian, Armenian Catholic  
Jerusalem - December 15, 2009

The document also includes this introduction:

This document did not come about spontaneously, and it is not the result of a coincidence. It is not a theoretical theological study or a policy paper, but is rather a document of faith and work. Its importance stems from the sincere expression of the concerns of the people and their view of this moment in history we are living through. It seeks to be prophetic in addressing things as they are without equivocation and with boldness, in addition it puts forward ending the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land and all forms of discrimination as the solution that will lead to a just and lasting peace with the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Al-Quds as its capital. The document also demands that all peoples, political leaders and decision-makers put pressure on Israel and take legal measures in order to oblige its government to put an end to its oppression and disregard for the international law. The document also holds a clear position that non-violent resistance to this injustice is a right and duty for all Palestinians including Christians. The initiators of this document have been working on it for more than a year, in prayer and discussion, guided by their faith in God and their love for their people, accepting advice from many friends: Palestinians, Arabs and those from the wider international community. We are grateful to our friends for their solidarity with us.

As Palestinian Christians we hope that this document will provide the turning point to focus the efforts of all peace-loving peoples in the world, especially our Christian sisters and brothers. We hope also that it will be welcomed positively and will receive strong support, as was the South Africa Kairos document launched in 1985, which, at that time proved to be a tool in the struggle against oppression and occupation. We believe that liberation from occupation is in the interest of all peoples in the region because the problem is not just a political one, but one in which human beings are destroyed. We pray God to inspire us all, particularly our leaders and policy-makers, to find the way of justice and equality, and to realize that it is the only way that leads to the genuine peace we are seeking.

## 2. WHY TARGET THESE PARTICULAR COMPANIES?

All of these companies are involved in supporting the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands in some way as documented by the Israeli organization We Divest (see [www.wedivest.org](http://www.wedivest.org)). In particular:

- \* Caterpillar is a U.S. American firm that manufactures and provides bulldozers and civil engineering tools. It sells bulldozers to the Israeli army that are weaponized and used in the systematic demolition of homes and civilian infrastructure as part of the Israeli army's doctrine of urban warfare. The Caterpillar sales are covered under U.S. military aid to Israel. Caterpillar bulldozers have been used in war crimes in South Lebanon, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. They have also been used to demolish Palestinian homes in the West Bank as an arbitrary punitive measure and to build the Separation Wall and illegal settlements on occupied Palestinian land.
- \* Hewlett-Packard (HP) is a global provider of computer products, including PCs, printers, servers, software, and IT services and solutions. HP provides ongoing support and maintenance to a biometric ID system installed in Israeli checkpoints in the occupied West Bank, which deprive Palestinians of freedom of movement in their own land and allow the Israeli military occupation to grant or deny special privileges to the civilians under its control. HP also provides the Israeli military with other equipment and services to help it maintain the illegal occupation. In the United States HP is one of the government's top 25 defense contractors.
- \* Motorola Solutions is an electronics and telecommunication corporation that split from Motorola Inc. in 2011. Through its subsidiary, Motorola Solutions Israel, the company profits from Israel's control of the Palestinian population by providing surveillance systems around Israeli settlements, checkpoints, and military camps in the West Bank, as well as by providing communication systems to the Israeli Army.
- \* Group 4 Securicor (G4S) is a British-Danish security conglomerate that operates in 120 countries with a net worth of \$1 billion. Through its Israeli subsidiary, G4S provides security systems for Israeli prisons and detention centers in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. It also provides security services for Israeli military checkpoints, business operating in illegal Israeli settlements, and the Israeli police headquarters in the occupied West Bank.
- \* Veolia Israeli subsidiaries operate a settler landfill in the occupied Jordan Valley and dump Israeli waste from within Israel and from illegal settlements into the occupied area in violation of international law. Veolia Transdev, which through its subsidiary Connex, operated bus lines for settlers on segregated roads in the Palestinian West Bank, and other lines throughout Israel, has sold off all of its bus services in Israel/Palestine. It still owns shares in the Jerusalem Light Rail and continues to operate it. The Jerusalem Light Rail is an infrastructure project connecting Jerusalem with Israeli settlement neighborhoods and settlements, designed by the Israelis on Palestinian land.
- \* SodaStream International, registered in the Netherlands and Israel, manufactures and distributes home carbonation devices and flavoring for soft drinks. Sodastream's main production site is in Mishor Edomin, the industrial park of Ma'aleh Adumim, an illegal Israeli settlement in the West Bank.
- \* Ahava manufactures cosmetic products using minerals from the Dead Sea. The company's factory and visitor's center is located in the Mitzpe Shalem settlement in the occupied Jordan Valley. In addition, Ahava is partially owned by the settlement.
- \* Hadiklaim exports dates from Israel and from Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, especially in the Jordan Valley. The company markets most of the dates from the occupied Jordan valley and all the dates from the occupied Dead-Sea area. The company markets dates under the brand names of Jordan River, Jordan River Bio-Top and King Solomon, and under private labels of supermarket chains.

## 3. UCC PIN'S RESOLUTION:

“UCCPIN believes the time has come to fulfill the clause of the 2005 Economic Leverage Resolution... ‘to divest from companies that refuse to change their practices of gain from the perpetuation of violence, including the Occupation’, and to boycott companies which profit from the occupation of Palestinian land, and therefore, submits the attached Resolution of Witness Regarding the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.”

See the full text of the resolution at <http://synod.uccpages.org/resolutions/index.htm>