

1 **IN SUPPORT OF EFFECTIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE PEACEMAKING**
2 **BETWEEN PALESTINIANS AND ISRAELIS THROUGH POSITIVE**
3 **INVESTMENT IN PALESTINE**

4
5 **A Resolution of Witness**

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7 **Submitted by 10 delegates or delegates-elect to the Twenty-eighth General Synod;**
8 **Michael Small, Dan Batson, T. Michael Rock, Hannah Tower, Sharon J Fazel**
9 **(Minnesota Conference); Tom Kuergeleis (Illinois South Conference); Bob**
10 **Atkinson, Bob Keller, Bruce Moeller (Missouri Mid-South Conference); William A.**
11 **Ragan, Jr. (Penn Northeast Conference); Douglas S. Hatfield (New Hampshire**
12 **Conference); James Semmelroth Darnell (Justice and Witness Ministries Board of**
13 **Directors); Jerry Carpenter, Kathy Fox, Margaret Snyder, Florence Burns (South**
14 **Central Conference).**

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16 **SUMMARY**

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18 This resolution calls upon the Twenty-eighth General Synod of the United Church of
19 Christ to: act as a “third voice” in the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians and
20 work towards a thoughtful and constructive approach to effective peacemaking in the
21 Middle East that will support Palestinian sovereignty, economic growth in Palestine,
22 good and productive relationships between Israelis and Palestinians and long-lasting
23 stability with peace and security for both parties.

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25 **BACKGROUND**

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27 The Twenty-second General Synod of the United Church of Christ resolved to call on the
28 United States Government “ . . . to use financial resources to promote peace and justice
29 for both Israelis and Palestinians.”

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31 The Twenty-sixth General Synod of the United Church of Christ called for a balanced
32 approach when it sent a resolution to the Executive Council for implementation which (in
33 the “whereas” clauses) reaffirmed the Church’s “call to act as peacemakers in this war-
34 torn yet holy land” as it cautioned against “overlook[ing] many aspects of an
35 extraordinarily complicated situation and extraordinarily complicated relationships in the
36 region,” and recognized “the need for ongoing balanced study, commentary and critique
37 related to the conflict in the region.”

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39 Historically, General Synods of the United Church of Christ have affirmed the right of
40 both Israelis and Palestinians to self-determination and sovereignty within the framework
41 of a two-state solution.

 If Palestinian civil society lacks the necessary infrastructure, there will be no viable state
 when a political solution is found between the Palestinians and the Israelis. Therefore, on
 August 23, 2009, Salam Fayyad, the current Prime Minister of the Palestinian National
 Authority, detailed his two year working plan for developing the infrastructure and
 institutions of the future Palestinian State, including building Government offices, a stock

market, an airport, and a free market economy. PM Fayyad is also working at building non-corrupt, transparent institutions in Palestine and effective police and paramilitary security units.

These signs are very hopeful and PM Fayyad's efforts are bearing fruit. In 2009 an economic boom began with a growth rate on the West Bank reaching 8 percent, decidedly higher than in Israel or the West. Growth in the first half of 2010 was estimated by the International Money Fund at 9 percent for the West Bank.

There has been an increase in foreign investment. New car imports have increased on the West Bank, new shopping malls have opened in Jenin and Nablus, there has been growth in the tourism sector and there has been a resurgence of conferences and special events in the West Bank such as a visit of Palestinian importers to the Haifa port (March 2009), a professional seminar for 30 agriculturists on olives (March 2010) and an investment convention in Bethlehem (June 2010). Palestinian real estate developers have begun building the first modern, planned Palestinian city a few miles north of Ramallah on the West Bank.

The continuation of these positive trends is also reflected in some measures taken by Israel to help support economic activity and improvements in the security situation in the West Bank. For example, the Palestine Monetary Authority has been working with the Bank of Israel to establish smooth banking relations between the respective economies and in the first half of 2010 there was an increase in deposits of Palestinian banks in Israeli banks possibly due to the increased volume of business between the two economies (according to the Bank of Israel). In the first half of 2010 there was also an increase in the number of Palestinian identity card holders with work permits employed in Israel (according to Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics Labor Force surveys). Israel has also reduced the number of checkpoints and roadblocks on the West Bank to facilitate movement.

While these measures in no way replace concrete steps towards a political solution, they are necessary and positive steps that must be taken towards Palestinian state-building and they have improved the lives of Palestinians on the West Bank even under the current situation. Thus, the World Bank reported in September 2010 that "[i]f the Palestinian Authority (PA) maintains its current performance in institution-building and delivery of public services, it is well-positioned for the establishment of a state at any point in the near future."

Looking to the future, recognizing that these two people live side by side and that in order to have a viable Palestinian state both the Palestinian and Israeli economies, which will be mutually interdependent, must be championed, positive investment in Palestine in particular must be encouraged.

Encouraging our Churches to get involved in positive investment in Palestine is a far more productive approach than boycott, divestment and/or economic sanction campaigns.

Boycott, divestment and economic sanction campaigns focus on combating perceived enemies and punishing and blaming one side in a complex conflict rather than on promoting constructive solutions to the conflict and improving the lives of Palestinians. These campaigns are based on the misconception that one side holds all the blame and are very destructive in that they serve to increase the fear and isolation of the Israeli public and markedly decrease the likelihood of their being willing to take the risk inherent in any peace agreement.

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL RATIONALE

Justice and peace are both close to the heart of God. The United Church of Christ must respond to the mandate to “seek justice” (Isaiah 1:17) and “act with justice and righteousness” (Jer: 22:3). As Jesus taught us we must “strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness.” (Matthew 6:33)

Jesus calls all of his followers to work for peace. “Blessed are the peacemakers,” he said, “for they will be called children of God.” (Matthew 5:9). Jesus also taught us to be “wise as serpents and innocent as doves.” (Matthew 10:16)

“Wisdom is the principal thing,” (Proverbs 4:7). “Happy is the person who finds wisdom and gains understanding. For the profit of wisdom is better than silver, and her wages are better than gold. Wisdom is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her!” (Proverbs 3:13-15). “Preserve sound judgment and discernment, do not let them out of your sight; they will be life for you, an ornament to grace your neck. Then you will go on your way in safety, and your foot will not stumble.” (Proverbs 3:21-23).

A moral wisdom consists in the rejection of those things which are harmful and the choosing of those things which are beneficial. Therefore, in the midst of this extraordinarily complicated and volatile situation, the Church is called to employ the highest standards of wisdom in its participation in the peacemaking process.

If we apply these principles of justice, peace and wisdom as reflected in this resolution to our response to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, we will be able to participate in true peacemaking in the region.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the Twenty-eighth General Synod of the United Church of Christ affirms the need to find a way to help bring about an independent, sovereign Palestinian state as well as peace, prosperity and security for both Palestinians and Israel; and

WHEREAS, the Twenty-eighth General Synod of the United Church of Christ acknowledges the political reality that when a Palestinian State is created, this state will

greatly benefit from positive economic interaction with all neighboring countries, including Israel and that in order to have a viable Palestinian state, both the Palestinian and Israeli economies, which will be mutually interdependent, must be championed and positive investment in Palestine in particular must be encouraged; and

WHEREAS, the Twenty-eighth General Synod of the United Church of Christ also acknowledges that the Church must seize the current opportunity to determine how best to act as a peacemaker in Israel-Palestine in the current historical context -- and not fan the flames of conflict by adopting approaches such as boycott, divestment and economic sanctions which are ultimately destructive to peacemaking in Israel and Palestine because they seek primarily to punish and blame one side in a complex conflict, rather than serving the purpose of encouraging reconciliation and raising both people up; and

WHEREAS, the Twenty-eighth General Synod of the United Church of Christ acknowledges that the work of nation-building is necessary and productive and without it there will be no viable Palestinian state; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Twenty-eighth General Synod affirms its commitment to justice, peace, and reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians at the same time that it avoids any movement towards boycott, divestment and/or economic sanctions which in the case of Israel and Palestine, will serve to encourage more conflict as it seeks to punish one-side as if their actions alone are to blame for the failure to reach a peaceful and just solution; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Twenty-eighth General Synod of the United Church of Christ recognizes that it can profitably act as a “third voice,” which will not act to fan the flames of this conflict, but rather help and challenge both sides to find positive ways forward. That voice will emerge from dialogue and interaction among all in the church who commit themselves to the cause of the Gospel in this conflict and all others who share our quest for peace and justice; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Twenty-eighth General Synod of the United Church of Christ recognizes the need to become true partners of the Palestinian people by encouraging concrete measures that can be taken by the Church and church members to support the Palestinian people in their current efforts in building up their economy and their nation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Twenty-eighth General Synod directs the Executive Council to establish a Task Force to study and make recommendations for such concrete measures that can be taken by the Church and church members to encourage, aid and assist the Palestinian people in their current efforts in nation building. This Task Force should consist of UCC members representing diverse perspectives, settings and constituencies of the church.

FUNDING

Funding for the implementation of this resolution will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Executive Council, Wider Church Ministries, The Pension Boards and United Church Fund are requested to this resolution.