

**WHEREAS** the United Church of Christ holds seriously the call to be an open and welcoming faith community, accepting into the church body and leadership all facets of expression found in God's people, creating a rich diversity of expression, background, culture, sexual and gender identity and expression.

**WHEREAS** the work of conference ministry and associate conference ministry places those doing the work at the intersection of church life, between the Local Church and the National Setting, including associations where those exist calling for "keeping communication flowing in all directions, nurturing relationships, articulating and supporting covenantal relationships."

**WHEREAS** in response to "[t]he Proposal for Action adopted by the Twentieth General Synod called upon local churches, conferences and associations, those called and employed by the church, and various national bodies to act in a variety of ways in support of the fair and just compensation of all persons called and employed by the church" the AACM states it provides resources and advocacy to support ACMs in their positions.

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Third General Synod of the United Church of Christ recognizes the establishment of the Alliance of Associate Conference Ministers, a Self-Created Group serving to support those who serve in a staff or called position doing conference ministry in the support of the conference minister and conference.

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** the Alliance of Associate Conference Ministers be identified as related in covenant to the United Church of Christ, through a primary relationship as a Self-Created Group with the United Church of Christ Board.

**FUNDING:** The funding for the implementation of the Resolution will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

**IMPLEMENTATION:** The Officers, in consultation with appropriate ministries or other 37 entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.

**6. DECLARATION FOR A JUST PEACE BETWEEN PALESTINE AND ISRAEL**

Submitted by various churches. Moderator Lowes called on Elliott Munn (Vermont Conference) to present the recommended action. Elliott Munn called on Kay Albright, (Heartland Conference) to speak to the motion, and Kay Albright moved that the Thirty-third General Synod adopt the resolution Declaration For a Just Peace Between Palestine and Israel, as amended. Elliott Munn spoke to the motion.

**Motion to Amend**

David Grishaw-Jones (New Hampshire Conference) moved to strike the words "systemic economic and political segregation of the Palestinian people" and add in their place "apartheid system of laws and legal procedures."

Seconded by Matthew Hogue-Smith (Heartland Conference).

Proposed Amendment:

*We affirm* that all people living in Palestine and Israel are created in the image of God and that this bestows ultimate dignity and sacredness to all;

*Therefore, we reject* any laws and legal procedures which are used by one race or religion or political entity to enshrine one people in a privileged legal position at the expense of another, including Israel's ~~systematic economic and political segregation of the Palestinian people~~ **[apartheid system of laws and legal procedures.]**

Discussion:

Diane Weible (UCCB) spoke in favor

Andrew Roblyer (South Central Conference) spoke in favor

Hawley Brown (Southern New England Conference) spoke in favor

Billie Grace Berry (California-S/Nevada Conference) spoke in favor

Maddie Furman (Southern Conference) spoke in favor

Karen Bruno (Heartland Conference) spoke against

Barbara Hesse (Southern New England Conference) spoke against

Jeff Lukens (Southern New England Conference) spoke against

Kay Albright (Heartland Conference) spoke against

### **Vote on Motion to Amend the Resolution**

#### **21-GS-29 VOTED:**

MOTION CARRIED (Vote: 324 Yes; 224 No; 13 Abstain)

The Moderator indicated discussion continues on the original Motion on the floor.

Further discussion:

Dawn Sorensen (Southern New England) spoke in favor

Paul Karch (Wisconsin Conference) spoke against

### **Motion to Amend**

Shari Prestemon (UCCB) moved to amend the resolution by adding the word “sin in” in after the word “a” in line 174 of the resolution.

Seconded by David Grishaw Jones (New Hampshire Conference).

Shari Prestemon spoke to the Motion.

Proposed Amendment:

1. We affirm that the continued oppression of the Palestinian people remains, after more than five decades of oppression of the Palestinian people, a matter of theological urgency and represents a **[sin in]** violation of the message of the biblical prophets and the Gospel, and that all efforts to defend or legitimate the oppression of the Palestinian people, whether passive or active, through silence, word, or deed by the Christian community, represent a fundamental denial of the Gospel.

Discussion:

James Ross II, (Southern New England Conference) spoke in favor

Jes Kast (Penn Central Conference) spoke in favor  
Neal MacPherson (Hawaii Conference) spoke in favor  
Guy S. Johnson (MRSEJ and Heartland Conference) spoke in favor  
Venson Jordan (South New England Conference) spoke in favor  
Josiah Accola (Illinois South Conference) spoke against

**Motion to Call the Question on Motion to Amend**

Dixie Laube (Iowa Conference) moved to call the question on the motion to amend.  
Seconded by Susan Steinmiller (Illinois Conference).

**Vote on Motion to Call the Question**

**21-GS-30 VOTED:**

MOTION CARRIED (Vote: 519 Yes; 21 No; 12 Abstain)

**Vote on Motion to Amend**

**21-GS-31 VOTED:**

MOTION CARRIED (Vote: 398 Yes; 139 No; 14 Abstain)

Moderator Lowes indicated the discussion would now continue on the Resolution with the two amendments added.

**Motion to Call the Question on Main Motion**

Dixie Laube (Iowa Conference) moved to call the question on the resolution.  
Seconded by Susan Steinmiller (Illinois Conference).

**Vote on Motion to Call the Question**

**21-GS-32 VOTED:**

MOTION CARRIED (Vote: 519 Yes; 29 No; 8 Abstain)

**Vote on Main Motion, as amended**

**21-GS-33 VOTED:** The Thirty-third General Synod of the United Church of Christ voted to adopt the Resolution Declaration for a Just Peace Between Palestine and Israel, as amended.

MOTION CARRIED (Vote: 462 Yes; 78 No; 8 Abstain)

**DECLARATION FOR A JUST PEACE BETWEEN PALESTINE AND ISRAEL  
A Resolution of Witness**

**TEXT OF THE MOTION**

**WHEREAS** for over seventy years Palestinian people have faced dispossession of their land, displacement from their homes, a harsh military occupation, severe restrictions on travel, the military detention of their children, home demolitions – over 120,000 to date and the constant threat of more – and vast inequities in access to natural, economic, and medical resources when

compared to that enjoyed by Israeli citizens living in illegal West Bank settlements, and also on a daily basis face severe restrictions on access to their olive groves, farms, and holy sites; and

**WHEREAS** there are more than 5.6 million Palestinian refugees registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Administration representing a global displacement of Palestinian people dating back to 1948 whose future status remains unresolved; and

**WHEREAS** the Israeli government has maintained an illegal military occupation of Palestinian territories since 1967 that includes the establishment of illegal Jewish-only settlements throughout the West Bank and more recently has enacted formal discrimination against its Arab citizens through the passage of the Nation State Law in 2018; and

**WHEREAS** provocative actions under the Trump administration, including moving the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, the suspension of humanitarian aid to the United Nations Relief and Works Administration, and support for Israel's proposed illegal annexation of land in the occupied West Bank have further injured the Palestinian community and imposed serious road blocks to peace; and

**WHEREAS** the Trump Administration's Department of Education has issued a rule labeling any criticism of the State of Israel as an antisemitic act in order to suppress advocacy for Palestinian rights on university campuses, and has joined many state governments in further suppressing freedom of speech in support of Palestinian civil society's call for boycotts, divestment, and sanctions; and

**WHEREAS** actions by Israel, with tacit and overt support from the United States government, have established conditions comparable to those in force under Jim Crow in the United States south between Reconstruction and the Civil Rights Movement, with segregation laws that enshrined systematic domination and oppression by whites over blacks. Israel's acts of domination and oppression include, but are not limited to adoption of the Nation State Law in 2018, the building of the separation barrier, implementation of a restrictive pass system for Palestinians, the creation of Israeli-only highways through the West Bank, and imposed military detention of Palestinian children accused of crimes; and

**WHEREAS** the General Synod of the United Church of Christ and its officers have for over fifty years advocated for a negotiated process leading to a just peace between Israel and Palestine marked by adherence to international law and international standards of human rights and honoring the principle of self-determination and the rights of Palestinian refugees; and

**WHEREAS**, reminiscent of historical examples such as the United States, Canada, Australia, and Southern Africa, Israel exhibits a current-day form of settler colonialism, actively engaged in the removal and erasure of the indigenous Palestinian population, through a matrix of control that includes: the imposition of a harsh military occupation; the de facto annexation of Palestinian lands and threats of further annexation; the expansion of illegal Jewish only settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank; the contraction of Palestinian-controlled land; and the restriction of travel for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza;

**WHEREAS** Cry for Hope: A Call for Decisive Action issued by Palestinian Christian leaders and theologians in July, 2020, states that “the very being of the church, the integrity of the Christian faith, and the credibility of the Gospel is at stake. We declare that support for the oppression of the Palestinian people, whether passive or active, through silence, word or deed, is a sin. We assert that Christian support for Zionism as a theology and an ideology that legitimize the right of one people to deny the human rights of another is incompatible with the Christian faith and a grave misuse of the Bible”;

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Third General Synod of the United Church of Christ adopts the following Declaration:

1. We affirm that the continued oppression of the Palestinian people remains, after more than five decades of oppression of the Palestinian people, a matter of theological urgency and represents a sin in violation of the message of the biblical prophets and the Gospel, and that all efforts to defend or legitimate the oppression of the Palestinian people, whether passive or active, through silence, word, or deed by the Christian community, represent a fundamental denial of the Gospel.

Therefore, we reject the notion that Israel’s occupation of Palestine is a purely political problem outside the concern of the church or that the oppression of the Palestinian people is an inevitable consequence of global or regional geopolitical interests.

2. We affirm that the biblical narrative beginning with creation and extending through the calling of the Israelites, the corrective admonitions of the prophets, the incarnation and ministry of Jesus and the witness of the apostles to the “ends of the earth” . . . speaks of God's blessing extending to “all the families of the earth.” (Genesis 12.3)

Therefore, we reject any theology or ideology including Christian Zionism, Supercessionism, antisemitism or anti-Islam bias that would privilege or exclude any one nation, race, culture, or religion within God’s universal economy of grace.

3. We affirm that all people living in Palestine and Israel are created in the image of God and that this bestows ultimate dignity and sacredness to all;

Therefore, we reject any laws and legal procedures which are used by one race or religion or political entity to enshrine one people in a privileged legal position at the expense of another, including Israel’s apartheid system of laws and legal procedures.

4. We affirm that all peoples have the right to self-determination and to their aspirations for sovereignty and statehood in the shaping of their corporate religious, cultural, and political life, free from manipulation or pressure from outside powers, and that a just resolution of conflicting claims is only achieved through the equal protection of civil rights, the fair and just sharing of land and resources, and peaceful negotiation based on international law and UN resolutions.

Therefore, we reject the use of Scripture to claim a divine right to the land as the rationale for Israel’s illegal seizure and annexation of Palestinian land as well as the imposition of so-called

peace agreements by Israel or the United States through the exercise of political and military domination that leaves Palestinians without equal rights, full citizenship, and the opportunity to thrive religiously, culturally, politically, and economically.

5. We affirm the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes if they so choose or to be compensated for their loss of property, consistent with UN General Assembly resolution 194 (1948).

Therefore, we reject the denial of this right, just as we reject efforts to manipulate internationally-agreed upon definitions of refugees to attempt to erase this right which extends across generations.

6. We affirm the First Amendment constitutional right to freedom of speech and assembly to protest the actions of the State of Israel and to uphold the rights of Palestinians, including the use of economic measures to support justice as a First Amendment right and joining the international Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement by individuals, institutions, corporations, and religious bodies that advocate peace with justice or participate in any aspect of the use of economic measures to support justice.

Therefore, we reject the idea that any criticism of policies of the State of Israel is inherently antisemitic, in confession that some criticism is antisemitic in intent or impact, and we oppose the efforts of U.S. federal and state governments to limit free speech on university campuses and to restrict or ban support of the international Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that national setting of the United Church of Christ send the text of this Declaration to Local Churches, Associations and Conferences; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** that all settings of the United Church of Christ be encouraged to receive this Declaration as a prophetic call for renewed and continued advocacy for a just peace in Palestine and Israel and use it as a plumblineline for taking action, including, for example:

a. Committing to hearing the voices of Palestinians regarding their situation, including the voices of Palestinian Christians through the study of Palestine Liberation Theology, attention to statements and appeals such as *Kairos Palestine: A Moment of Truth* (2009) and *a Cry for Hope* (2020), participation in travel seminars that expose visitors to the Palestinian community, and use of resources from Global Ministries of the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

b. Implementing the calls of prior General Synod resolutions, including the 2015 Resolution, “A Call for the United Church of Christ to Take Actions Toward a Just Peace in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,” and the 2017 Resolution, “A Call for the United Church of Christ to Advocate for the Rights of Children Living Under Israeli Military Occupation.”

c. Examining critically our use and interpretations of Scripture as well as liturgies and hymns that equate ancient Biblical Israel with the modern state in ways that promote settler colonialism and the dispossession of Palestinian land, rights, and cultural expressions.

d. Offering support and encouragement to college students and faculty members as well as the human rights groups (including Students for Justice in Palestine, Jewish Voice for Peace, American Muslims for Palestine, and many other allied groups), whose freedom to speak, witness and advocate on university campuses is threatened in any way by state or local governments, or by college administrators.

e. Advocating for the cessation of U.S. military aid to Israel until such time that Palestinian human rights, civil rights, and self-determination are fully realized and protected in compliance with international law, US laws on foreign military assistance, and the principles of human rights.

f. Supporting the full restoration of US funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency which carries out critical services by and for Palestinian refugees, and encouraging continued support for UCC partners which serve Palestinian refugees.

g. Demanding that the plight of Palestinian refugees be addressed by Israel and the international community based on United Nations Resolution 194 guaranteeing that “refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of international law or equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible.”

**FUNDING:** The funding for the implementation of the Resolution will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

**IMPLEMENTATION:** The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries or other entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.

## **7. A RESOLUTION TO BAN THE PRACTICE OF CONVERSION THERAPY**

This Resolution was submitted by the Open and Affirming Coalition and Mental Health Network. Moderator Lowes introduced Crystal Silva McCormick (South Central Conference) and Crystal Silva McCormick indicated the changes that were made in the resolution. The resolution to Ban the Practice of Conversion Therapy, as amended was moved by Jamie Lee Sprague Ballou (Southern California-Nevada Conference) moved that the Resolution to Ban the Practice of Conversion Therapy, as amended be adopted by the 33<sup>rd</sup> General Synod of the United Church of Christ. Crystal Silva McCormick spoke to the resolution.

Discussion:

Izzy Harbin (Indiana-Kentucky Conference) spoke in support

Tyler Connoley (Conference Minister for the Central Pacific Conference) spoke in support

### **Motion to Call the Question**

Josiah Accola (Illinois South Conference) moved to call the question.

The motion was seconded.