A Proposed Resolution of Witness

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

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

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

"As disciples of Jesus, we hear and seek to heed his call to be peacemakers: responding to violence with non-violence and extending love to all. In the words of the Kairos Palestine document, “True Christian theology is a theology of love and solidarity with the
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History this resolution grows from the seeds of more than 20 General Synod and Executive Council actions speaking to a just peace between the Palestinian people and the State of Israel. It is an incarnation of what we mean by proclaiming that the United Church of Christ is a just peace church. Further, this resolution seeks to embody the covenantal theology we proclaim as a church by advocating for the common good by lending our voice to the organized work of others from various faith traditions who are striving for the same goal: a peaceful resolution to the conflict between the Palestinian people and the State of Israel. This resolution affirms HCC's campaign.

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

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! The Lord of hosts has sworn in my hearing: Surely many houses shall be desolate, large and beautiful houses, without inhabitant. For ten acres of vineyard shall yield but one bath, and a homer of seed shall yield a mere ephah.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

9 http://www.uccpalestineisraelnetwork.org/Theological-Statement.html
10 Ibid.
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involving the United States, and thereby educates others about the root causes of those conflicts and advocate for these children more generally, raising awareness and hope that helps strengthen our own community and creates new networks for social justice." HCC has launched a campaign calling on the City of Grand Rapids, Michigan, to divest its contract and holdings with companies profiting from or complicit in the ongoing conflict between the State of Israel and the Palestinian People, an effort that mirrors the values and goals of the United Church of Christ General Synod Resolution entitled A Call for the United Church of Christ to Take Actions Toward a Just Peace in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.


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Text of the Motion

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CALLS upon the city of Grand Rapids, Michigan, to divest any direct or substantive indirect holdings or contracts, and to declare a moratorium on acquiring holdings or entering contracts, with companies profiting from or complicit in human rights violations arising from the
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occupation of the Palestinian Territories by the State of Israel until such time as these companies no longer profit from or are complicit in said human rights violations;

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

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

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

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

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

Funding

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

Implementation

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