

1 The Board of Directors recommends this resolution be sent to a Committee of the
2 General Synod.

3
4 **A CALL FOR THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST TO TAKE ACTIONS TOWARD A**
5 **JUST PEACE IN THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT**

6
7 **Submitted by New Hampshire Conference**
8 **A Resolution of Witness**

9
10 **SUMMARY**

11
12 This resolution proposes a fourfold strategy by the United Church of Christ to help end
13 the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It includes “calls” that seek to establish a just
14 peace: 1) A call to study the 2009 Kairos Palestine document, *‘A Moment of Truth’: A*
15 *Word of Faith, Hope, and Love from the Heart of Palestinian Suffering*; 2) a call to
16 United Church of Christ entities to divest holdings from companies profiting from the
17 occupation of Palestinian territories; 3) a call to all entities of the United Church of Christ
18 to boycott goods produced by Israeli companies in the occupied Palestinian territories;
19 and 4) a call to request Congress to investigate whether U.S. military aid given to Israel
20 violates U.S. laws.

21
22 **BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL GROUNDING**

23
24 This resolution is grounded in the Biblical prophetic call to do justice and the decisive
25 embodiment of that call in Jesus Christ. It springs from the Affirmation of the 15th
26 General Synod that the United Church of Christ is a Just Peace Church. That affirmation
27 commits the United Church of Christ to enacting “solidarity with the poor, seeking to be
28 present in places of oppression, poverty, and violence, and standing with the oppressed in
29 the struggle to resist and change . . . evil.” It thereby commits the United Church of
30 Christ to be both “a community of resistance, standing against social structures
31 comfortable with violence and injustice,” and “a community of political and social
32 engagement, in regular dialogue with the political order.”

33
34 In addition, the United Church of Christ has historically stressed the importance of living
35 out a Covenantal theology, whereby diverse autonomous organizations covenant to
36 collaborate for the common good. Through such Covenantal relationships, the United
37 Church of Christ partners globally with those most impacted by the continuing conflict
38 between the Palestinians and Israel. The current list of thirteen Global Ministries Middle
39 Eastern partners includes regional groups as well as Israeli and Palestinian groups,
40 notably Kairos Palestine.

41

42 Informed by that Just Peace commitment and Covenantal theology, this resolution seeks
43 to respond to the theological declaration of our Christian partners in the Middle East that
44 we are at a Kairos moment—a special opportunity provided by the “Still Speaking God”
45 for us individually as Christians and collectively as a church both to listen to the
46 Palestinian people courageously voice faith, hope, and love in the midst of their suffering
47 and to respond with action.

48

49 Such listening and response is thoroughly in keeping with various historical (and
50 historic!) United Church of Christ resolutions and actions concerning the Israel-
51 Palestinian conflict:

52

53 The United Church of Christ has affirmed the right of Israelis and
54 Palestinians to live peacefully within internationally recognized
55 borders.

56

57 The United Church of Christ has identified Israel’s occupation of
58 Palestinian land and the human rights abuses it has committed there
59 to be a major source of conflict and has called for an end to settlement
60 activity.

61

62 The United Church of Christ has a long history of effectively
63 supporting boycotts against products produced under unjust
64 conditions (lettuce, grapes, infant formula, etc.) and policies that
65 produce such conditions (apartheid).

66

67 The United Church of Christ has had, since the passage of the 2005
68 resolution on economic leverage, a strong history of corporate
69 engagement with companies that profit from the Occupation.

70

71 **MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY**

72

73 The desired outcome is a just peace in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The hope is that
74 individuals, churches, and church entities will learn of the present plight of the
75 Palestinians, will study the history of the conflict, will examine their own consciences,
76 and will engage in individual and institutional actions to pressure the government of
77 Israel to end the Occupation as a step toward a just peace. At the same time, the call is to
78 address members of our own government and ask them to ensure that U.S. aid to Israel
79 complies with applicable U.S. laws.

80

81 Those stakeholders most directly affected are the Palestinians. The originators of the
82 resolution, the United Church of Christ Palestine/Israel Network, have consulted with
83 United Church of Christ's Global Ministries partner, Kairos Palestine, and with the
84 movement that represents a wide coalition of the largest Palestinian organizations, trade
85 unions, networks, and NGOs. Both enthusiastically support the resolution, as do
86 Palestinian groups within the United States. Many groups in other Christian
87 denominations and in the Jewish community also support this resolution.

88
89 The originators have also approached the two major United Church of Christ financial
90 entities addressed by the divestment call – United Church Funds and the Pension Boards
91 – United Church of Christ, Inc.

92
93 The United Church of Christ Palestine/Israel Network has consulted with staff from
94 United Church Funds and has been in dialogue with them over the past six months. In
95 addition, a member of the United Church of Christ Palestine/Israel Network Steering
96 Committee has been welcomed to the meetings of the Ecumenical Action Group, which
97 has been working on corporate engagement with some of the companies named in the
98 resolution for the past nine years. None of the American companies named has
99 responded to shareholder pressure to disengage from its support of the Occupation. Two
100 of the international companies have taken steps to or made announcements that they
101 would remove their operations from the occupied territories, but they have not yet fully
102 done so. United Church of Christ Palestine/Israel Network is committed to continued
103 dialogue about the best way to make investment/divestment decisions and welcomes a
104 mechanism for establishing standards by which to make such decisions in the future.

105 United Church of Christ Palestine/Israel Network has also attempted to dialogue with the
106 Pension Boards – United Church of Christ, Inc. on the divestment issue. Thus far, its staff
107 has not been willing to engage in dialogue on the topic. Its executive has stated on the
108 basis of legal opinion that its fiduciary responsibilities do not allow it to make
109 investment/divestment decisions in response to Synod votes. Nevertheless, it has
110 responded to the 2005 Synod "Economic Leverage" resolution by investing in the Siraj
111 Fund, which supports nineteen Palestinian companies. Although this is indeed a positive
112 step in support of the Palestinian economy, it does not acknowledge Israel's complete
113 control over that economy and all its resources as documented by the World Bank.

114 Therefore, it cannot be viewed as an effective step toward ending the Occupation.

115 Finally, this resolution recognizes that members of the Jewish community with whom we
116 have had long standing interfaith relationships are also stakeholders. It commends those
117 relationships and calls for them to continue and expand.

118
119 Action Steps

120 Studying the *Kairos Palestine* document individually and in church groups

121 Encouraging travel to the region with Global Ministries and other alternative
122 travel groups
123 Sponsoring local educational conferences
124 Self-examining investment portfolios by individuals, churches, conferences,
125 and national United Church of Christ entities to discern whether and how
126 divestment may be effectuated
127 Working side by side with allied organizations in local communities to initiate
128 and support boycott actions
129 Writing letters and petitions, as well as making visits, to members of Congress
130 in cooperation with Justice and Witness Ministries or other peace groups
131 Initiating or continuing interfaith dialogues at all levels

132

133 Evaluation Plan

134 The resolution asks the General Minister and President to provide the whole
135 church an annual assessment on the implementation of the resolution. United
136 Church of Christ Palestine/Israel Network will offer a report on actions in the
137 wider church that may be of assistance in developing that assessment.

138

139 **INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY**

140

141 The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries or other entities
142 within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body for each of the
143 four components addressed in the resolution (elucidated above in the section entitled
144 Summary), with the funding to be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the
145 affected agencies (primarily the United Church Board, Global Ministries, and Justice and
146 Witness Ministries) and the funds available to these agencies, keeping in mind that many
147 of the actions will be taken by individuals and congregations of the United Church of
148 Christ.

149

150 In addition, Global Ministries, the joint witness of the United Church of Christ and
151 Disciples of Christ for international peace, reconciliation, and justice, will be invaluable
152 in implementing the resolution as it works to nurture existing partnerships in the region.
153 Its efforts will be enhanced by the June 2015 launch of its eighteen-month Middle East
154 Initiative.

155

156 Moreover, the United Church of Christ Palestine/Israel Network, supported by its own
157 budget, will continue to broaden its work of educating local churches and conferences.

158

159 Taking all the aforementioned into account, it is clear that the United Church of Christ is
160 currently well-equipped to implement easily this resolution.

161

162 **PROBABILITY OF INFLUENCING SOCIAL CHANGE**

163

164 With the adoption of this resolution, the 30th General Synod of the United Church of
165 Christ will secure its rightful place alongside other denominations and peace-seeking
166 groups in the United States and around the world that are taking a public stand against the
167 occupation of Palestinian territories by the Israeli government while promoting the
168 human rights of the Palestinians and opposing the use of violence by either party.

169

170 The unresolved Israeli-Palestinian conflict is of world-wide concern and has the potential
171 to influence many other issues, including the safety of U.S. citizens here and abroad. The
172 United Church of Christ has not addressed this conflict via resolution since 2005; yet
173 political realities have changed drastically in the interim. Israel's occupation of
174 Palestinian territories has become increasingly entrenched; settlements have grown
175 exponentially; four massive attacks have been carried out on Gaza; and several attempts
176 at the "peace process" have failed to resolve the conflict. Frustration with the lack of
177 progress has contributed to escalating violence from both sides.

178

179 Meanwhile, Palestinian Christians have issued their *Kairos Palestine 2009 – "A Moment*
180 *of Truth"* document, and Palestinian civil society has endorsed a movement calling for
181 boycott, divestment, and sanctions. That movement is now world-wide and has achieved
182 some notable successes, particularly in Europe but also in the U.S., including the loss of
183 \$26 million in contracts by Veolia, the divestment from Israeli banks by European banks
184 and pension funds, and the loss of revenue by SodaStream. Recently, Kuwait announced
185 the termination of contracts with companies complicit in the Occupation and Sweden
186 recognized the State of Palestine. In addition, most of the mainline Protestant
187 denominations in the U.S. have been considering resolutions that call for some form of
188 boycott and/or divestment. Indeed, local Presbyteries, Episcopal Dioceses, and Methodist
189 Conferences have voted to boycott or divest. Most notably, the Presbyterian General
190 Assembly voted in 2014 to divest from three companies.

191

192 By approving this resolution with its clear, unequivocal call for specific actions toward
193 ending the occupation of Palestinian territories, the United Church of Christ can offer a
194 sign of hope to the Palestinians and add its weight to a world-wide movement toward a
195 just peace in the region.

196

197 United Church of Christ Palestine/Israel Network has been presenting workshops and
198 study sessions on this issue in local churches, associations, and conferences since its
199 inception in January 2012 and will continue to do so. The consideration of this resolution
200 in five United Church of Christ conferences and its acceptance as a study document in

201 two more conferences have led to an enormous amount of discussion and education in
202 those conferences. Without a resolution with specific action components, such
203 engagement would not have occurred. The consideration of the resolution by the Synod
204 opens this conversation to the wider United Church of Christ.

205

206 **TEXT OF THE MOTION**

207

208 The psalmist celebrates, “How good it is when brothers and sisters dwell together in
209 unity” (Psalm 133). Yet today the Middle East is torn by disunity between Semitic
210 brothers and sisters separated by “dividing walls of hostility” (Ephesians 2:14). We hear
211 the call of the prophet Micah, “And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice,
212 and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8).

213

214 As disciples of Jesus, we hear and seek to heed his call to be peacemakers: responding to
215 violence with non-violence and extending love to all. In the words of our Palestinian
216 Christian partners in *Kairos Palestine*, “True Christian theology is a theology of love and
217 solidarity with the oppressed, a call to justice and equality among peoples.” (*Kairos-*
218 *Palestine 2009: A Moment of Truth*)¹

219

220 THEREFORE, in the spirit of the ancient prophets and the ministry of Jesus, we offer this
221 resolution:

222

223 WHEREAS, in 1985 the Fifteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ
224 committed itself to be a Just Peace Church;² and at its 2003 Annual Meeting the New
225 Hampshire Conference committed itself to be a Just Peace Conference;

226

227 WHEREAS, historically the United Church of Christ has affirmed Israel’s right to exist
228 within secure and internationally recognized boundaries (GS 16 [1987]³, GS 18 [1991]⁴),
229 and asserted the rights of Palestinians to enjoy sovereignty in an independent, contiguous,
230 and viable state of their own, within secure and recognized boundaries (GS 16 [1987], GS
231 17 [1989]⁵, GS 18 [1991]);

232

233 WHEREAS, past General Synods have identified the Israeli Occupation of Palestinian
234 land and its human rights abuses committed therein to be a major source of conflict and
235 have called for the end of the construction and expansion of settlements (GS 18 [1991],
236 GS 21 [1997]⁶);

237

238 WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ is deeply committed to interfaith relationships
239 and General Synods have confessed the sin of anti-Semitism and proclaimed its
240 renunciation (GS 23 [2001]⁷) and have denounced actions against Islam or Muslims
241 based on ignorance or fear (GS 28 [2011]⁸);

242

243 WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ values its relationships with Jewish groups in
244 the U.S. who have differing perspectives on the conflict and with Jewish Israeli peace

245 activists who have sought justice, equality, and freedom for both peoples;

246

247 WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ recognizes the complexity of the conflict
248 and that it has caused suffering for both Palestinians and Israelis;

249

250 WHEREAS, Palestinians in the West Bank have lived since 1967 under Israeli military
251 occupation which subjects them to many human rights abuses, including loss of their
252 land for the purpose of building Israeli settlements; limited access to their land and to
253 each other due to the route of the Separation Wall on Occupied Palestinian Territory;
254 being systematically pushed into small, noncontiguous geographic enclaves separated by
255 barriers and checkpoints; gross inequality in the amount of water allocated to
256 Palestinians; severe and arbitrary travel restrictions; limited access to holy sites;
257 segregated roads; the demolition of homes; the destruction of Palestinians' crops by
258 settlers and the Israeli army; arbitrary arrest, including the arrest of children⁹;

259

260 WHEREAS, the Israeli government subjects Palestinians in Gaza to military attacks
261 using disproportionately overwhelming force; severe limits on personal entry and the
262 entry of products essential to Gazans' well-being; a six-mile fishing limit in violation of
263 international law; strict Israeli control of electronic communications, air space, and sea
264 space; and the destruction of Gaza's infrastructure and economy;¹⁰

265

266 WHEREAS, Israel has annexed Palestinian East Jerusalem, separating it from the West
267 Bank and Gaza, and subjects Palestinians of East Jerusalem to the appropriation of their
268 properties for Jewish settlements, the denial of building permits, and the revocation of
269 residency rights;¹¹

270

271 WHEREAS, Israel refuses to end its occupation of territory conquered in the 1967 War,
272 leading to numerous illegal actions and human rights abuses there by the Israeli
273 government and military in defiance of United Nations resolutions,¹² and refuses to
274 respect the Fourth Geneva Convention, as called for by the International Court of Justice
275 in its opinion concerning the Separation Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory;¹³

276

277 WHEREAS, through the Kairos Palestine document of 2009 our Palestinian Christian
278 partners, seeking an alternative to violence born of hopelessness and despair, have
279 called on their global partners to engage in non-violent measures pressuring Israel to
280 end its occupation;¹⁴

281

282 WHEREAS, the resolution "Concerning the Use of Economic Leverage in Promoting
283 Peace in the Middle East," passed by the General Synod in 2005, called upon "the
284 Covenanted Ministries, Pension Boards, United Church Foundation, local churches
285 and members to use economic leverage, including, but not limited to: advocating the

286 reallocation of U.S. foreign aid so that the militarization of the Middle East is
287 constrained; making positive contributions to groups and partners committed to the
288 non-violent resolution of the conflict; challenging the practices of corporations that
289 gain from the continuation of the conflict; and divesting from those companies that
290 refuse to change their practice of gain from the perpetuation of violence, including the
291 Occupation”;¹⁵

292

293 WHEREAS, despite years of corporate engagement and the submission of shareholder
294 resolutions from United Church Funds¹⁶ and other religious and secular groups, few
295 companies have withdrawn any of their operations that support the Occupation;

296

297 WHEREAS, Jewish groups in the U.S. such as Jewish Voice for Peace¹⁷ and American
298 Jews for a Just Peace-Boston¹⁸ as well as Israeli groups such as the Israeli Committee
299 Against House Demolitions¹⁹ and Coalition of Women for Peace²⁰ support the Boycott,
300 Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement against the Israeli Occupation;

301

302 THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the 30th General Synod of the United Church
303 of Christ:

304

305 CALLS upon the churches and church members to study the Kairos Palestine document
306 and take heed of its call for solidarity with the Palestinian people;²¹

307

308 CALLS upon the United Church of Christ Board, United Church of Christ Pension
309 Boards, United Church Funds, Conferences, local churches, members, and other related
310 United Church of Christ entities to divest any holdings in companies profiting from the
311 occupation of the Palestinian Territories by the state of Israel, including, but not limited
312 to, Caterpillar Inc., Motorola Solutions, Hewlett-Packard Development Company LP,
313 G4S, and Veolia Environment and its subsidiaries;²²

314

315 CALLS upon all entities of the church to boycott goods produced by Israeli companies in
316 the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including, but not limited to, Ahava skin care
317 products,²³ SodaStream products²⁴, and Hadiklaim dates²⁵, and upon church members to
318 join boycotts in their local communities;

319 CALLS upon the United Church of Christ Officers of the Church and church members to
320 request Congress to investigate whether U.S. military aid given to Israel violates U.S.
321 laws, specifically, the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act and the U.S. Arms Export Control
322 Act;²⁶

323

324 CALLS upon the United Church of Christ Board to monitor the implementation of this
325 resolution by all national United Church of Christ entities and to ensure that those who

326 manage the United Church Board’s own invested funds and provide United Church
327 Board employee health and pension benefits are in compliance with the resolution; and
328
329 ASKS the General Minister and President to provide an annual report to the whole
330 church on the implementation of this resolution.
331

332 **FUNDING**

333
334 The funding for the implementation of the Resolution will be made in accordance with
335 the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.
336

337 **IMPLEMENTATION**

338
339 The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries or other entities
340 within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.
341

342
343 **Note: To link to these footnote sites go to United Church of Christ Palestine-Israel**
344 **Network web site: <uccpalestineisraelnetwork.org>. Select "Our Resolution" and**
345 **scroll down to footnotes. Click on selected footnote link addresses.**

- 346 1. <http://www.kairopalestine.ps/sites/default/Documents/English.pdf>
- 347 2. “General Synod pronouncement and proposal for action on the United Church of Christ as a ‘Just
348 Peace Church,’” <http://www.ucc.org/beliefs/theology/general-synod-pronouncement.html>
- 349 3. “The Israeli Palestinian Conflict,” <http://globalministries.org/mee/resolutions/ucc-resolutions-related-to-israelpalestine/1987-ip-resolution.html>
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351 4. “Consequences of the Persian Gulf War for a Just Peace Church,”
352 <http://globalministries.org/mee/resolutions/ucc-resolutions-related-to-israelpalestine/1991-gulf-war-resolution.html>
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354 5. “The Middle East,” <http://globalministries.org/mee/resolutions/ucc-resolutions-related-to-israelpalestine/1989-mid-east-resolution.html>
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356 6. “Palestine/Israel,” <http://globalministries.org/mee/resolutions/ucc-resolutions-related-to-israelpalestine/1997-palestine-israel-resol.html>
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358 7. Resolution: Anti-Semitism, Minutes of the Twenty-third General Synod, pp. 11-12,
359 <http://www.ucc.org/assets/pdfs/synod/gs23.pdf>
- 360 8. <http://uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/Resolution-On-Actions-of-Hostility-Against-Islam.pdf>
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- 362 9. Annual Report, B’Tselem, “Human Rights in the Occupied Territories 2011,”
363 http://www.btselem.org/annual_report_2011 and UN Human Rights Council Session 12,
364 “Human Rights in Palestine and Other Occupied Arab Territories,”
365 <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/12session/A-HRC-12-48.pdf>
- 366 10. Palestinian Center for Human Rights, <http://www.pchrgaza.org/portal/en/>
- 367 11. “Background on East Jerusalem,” B’Tselem, www.btselem.org/jerusalem
- 368 12. <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/study-israel-leads-in-ignoring-security-council-resolutions-1.31971> and <http://www.ifamericansknew.org/stat/un.html>
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- 370 13. Advisory Opinion, International Court of Justice, 9 July 2004, Legal Consequences of the
371 Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, [http://www.icj-
373 cij.org/docket/index.php?pr=71&code=mwp&p1=3&p2=4&p3=6](http://www.icj-
372 cij.org/docket/index.php?pr=71&code=mwp&p1=3&p2=4&p3=6)
374 14. “A moment of truth: A word of faith, hope, and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering,”
375 Kairos Palestine, 2009, <http://www.kairopalestine.ps/sites/default/Documents/English.pdf>
376 15. [http://globalministries.org/mee/resolutions/ucc-resolutions-related-to-israelpalestine/2005-
378 economic-leverage.html](http://globalministries.org/mee/resolutions/ucc-resolutions-related-to-israelpalestine/2005-
377 economic-leverage.html)
379 16. United Church Funds, “UCF Mideast Engagements,” [http://ucfunds.org/social-
382 responsibility/corporateengagement/economic-leverage/promoting-peace/united-church-funds-
383 engagements/](http://ucfunds.org/social-
380 responsibility/corporateengagement/economic-leverage/promoting-peace/united-church-funds-
381 engagements/)
384 17. www.jvp.org
385 18. www.ajjpboston.org
386 19. <http://icahdusa.org/an-open-letter-from-jeff-halper/>
387 20. <http://www.coalitionofwomen.org/>
388 21. The document, together with a study guide, Kairos Palestine: A Moment of Truth, prepared by
389 the Israel/Palestine Mission Network of the Presbyterian Church (USA), can be viewed here:
390 http://fosna.org/files/fosna/Kairos_StudyGuide_2011_6_FOSNA_Color.pdf and ordered here:
391 <http://store.pcusa.org/2646610001>
392 22. www.whoprofits.org and <https://wedivest.org/>
393 23. <http://www.codepink4peace.org/section.php?id=415>
394 24. <http://sodastreamboycott.org>
25. <http://whoprofits.org/company/hadiklaim-israel-date-growers-cooperative>
26. Letter dated October 5, 2012 from religious leaders asking Congress to investigate whether U.S.
military aid to Israel complies with U.S. law.
<http://globalministries.org/news/mee/pdfs/Military-aid-to-Israel-Oct-1-Final.pdf>