

AT A GLANCE



The United Church of Christ and ... **The Middle East**

The places of Israel and Palestine are dear to the United Church of Christ as Christians—because of the Biblical history centered there, because of the people (brothers and sisters in Christ, as well as Jews and Muslims) who are suffering there, and because of the call we accept to seek justice and pursue peace.

The conflict between Israelis and Palestinians is one of the most enduring conflicts of our time. The United Church of Christ, because of our connections of history and through the body of Christ, remains deeply concerned about the violence perpetuated, through acts of terror and by Occupation. Realities on the ground contradict the vision for resolution of the conflict we share. Through Global Ministries, we have participated in ministry with Palestinian Christians for decades, and engage in mission partnerships with Palestinian and Israeli organizations.

The UCC has been consistent in statements and positions on the Middle East through recent decades. In the setting of General Synod, delegates have been clear in their visions and hopes for Israelis and Palestinians, since 1967. Particularly since 1981, General Synod has been clear in its approach and positions, which include:

- Opposition to violence which “is fracturing our world, destroying our culture, and takes many forms.” General Synod “calls on every local church to act to overcome violence in our world ... by being a witness for peace with justice and reconciliation” (GS 23 [2001])
- Affirmation of Israel’s right to exist within secure and internationally recognized boundaries (GS 16 [1987], GS 18 [1991])
- Assertion of the right of Palestinians to enjoy sovereignty in an independent, contiguous, and viable state of their own, within secure and recognized boundaries, neighboring Israel (GS 16 [1987], GS 17 [1989] & GS 18 [1991])
- Support for a shared Jerusalem, capital of Israel and the Palestinian state, open to people of all faiths (GS 16 [1987], GS 19 [1993] & GS 21 [1997])
- Identification of the Israeli Occupation of Palestinian land—illegal under international law—to be a major source of conflict; and calls for the end of construction and expansion of settlements, actions that unilaterally change the facts on the ground and prejudice any negotiated resolution of the conflict (GS18 [1991] & GS 21 [1997])
- A call to the US government to “assure just treatment for the Arab refugees and relief of their suffering” (GS 6 [1967])

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- Support for a negotiated solution, including urging the US to play a role in such negotiations (GS 8 [1971], GS 17 [1989], GS 18 [1991])
- Criticism of the separation barrier (“security fence”/“segregation wall”) and its impact on Palestinians’ lives and livelihoods, as well as the result that people on both sides who wish to work together, in non-violent ways, to seek a resolution to the conflict, are denied that possibility (GS 25 [2005])
- A call for the use of economic leverage to promote peace in the Middle East—advocacy to reallocate US foreign aid so that the militarization of the Middle East is constrained; positive contributions to groups and partners committed to the non-violent resolution of the conflict; challenging the practices of corporations that gain from the continuation of the conflict; and divesting from those companies that refuse to change their practices of gain from the perpetuation of violence (GS [2005]).

All of the UCC’s General Synod resolutions related to Israel/Palestine can be found here:
http://www.globalministries.org/israel_palestine_resolutions.

The United Church of Christ is deeply committed to interfaith relationships, including with the Jewish and Muslim communities (http://www.globalministries.org/mee_resolutions, bottom of page). General Synod has addressed these relationships, most notably in the last 20 years:

- Affirmation of the UCC’s relationship with the Jewish community, including a rejection of supercessionist theology (GS 16 [1987]). Following this resolution, a significant dialogue project emerged on the central theological issues, among them supercessionism.
- Condemnation of anti-Semitism in all its forms (Executive Council 1983), and the confession of the sin of anti-Semitism and its renunciation (GS 23 [2001]).
- Affirmation of the UCC’s relationship with the Muslim community (GS 17 [1989]), and a condemnation of actions of hostility against Islam and Muslims (GS 28 [2011]). Individual congregations and settings of the church remain committed to interfaith dialogue with
- Jewish and Muslim faiths through shared conferences, celebrations and worship space:
(<http://www.ucc.org/tree-of-life-conference-1023013>)
(<http://www.ucc.org/thanksgiving-hanukkah-11262013>)
(http://www.ucc.org/countryside_trifaiht_movement_04142015)

UCC national leadership has also supported study of, and response to, the document *Kairos Palestine: A Moment of Truth*, which was issued by Palestinian Christians in December, 2009. In April, 2010, a pastoral letter was sent to the UCC (and Disciples) by the General Minister and President (of both denominations) drawing attention to *Kairos Palestine*. In addition, in Oct. 2012, UCC leadership joined ecumenical colleagues in calling on Congress to examine Israel’s adherence to US law, related to the \$3 billion worth of military aid the US send Israel annually ((<http://www.ucc.org/ucc-joins-christian-leaders>)). More recently, the Collegium directed a letter to the UCC in Advent 2012 calling for considerations of justice, peace, and human rights when purchasing holiday gifts.

A comprehensive summary of the UCC’s witness on peace between Palestine and Israel in the last 10 years, prepared by the national officers of the church, is available on the UCC website.

