



Global Ministries

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ

A Call for an End to the Occupation on the 50th Anniversary of the 1967 Arab-Israeli War

June 6, 2017

“How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I bear pain in my soul, and have sorrow in my heart all day long?” –Psalm 13:1-2a.

This week marks a half century since the watershed 1967 Arab-Israeli War. For Israelis, the military victory meant newfound access to and control over East Jerusalem, the West Bank, the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip, and the Golan Heights. For Egyptians and Syrians this event, called *al-Naksa* (“the setback”), meant the loss of important land areas. Sinai was eventually returned to Egypt, but the Golan Heights remains under Israeli control despite efforts to negotiate a return to Syria. For Palestinians, Israeli control of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza has meant a half century of occupation, during which Israel has developed systems of separation and differentiation between its own citizens, including settlers, and Palestinians.

2017 is a significant year in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as it marks the passing of several milestones:

- * 120 years since the First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland (1897);
- * 100 years since the Balfour Declaration’s issuance (1917);
- * 80 years since the British Peel Commission recommended partition (1937);
- * 70 years since the United Nations voted to support plan of partition (1947);
- * 50 years since the war resulting in occupation (1967); and
- * 30 years since the beginning of the first Palestinian *intifada*, which included many organized acts of non-violent resistance (1987).

Far from a complete timeline, these events provide brushstrokes of the complicated history of conflict, and help illuminate the fact that the issues of demography and dignity, geography and resources, are at its heart.

“Consider and answer me, O Lord my God! Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death.” Psalm 13:3.

For the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ and their joint work in Global Ministries, the main focus of advocacy and engagement has been the occupation, which has now endured for half a century and is a major, but not the only, source of injustice. International law neither admits the acquisition of land by force, nor the transfer of population into occupied territory; Israel has violated both. We know from the relationships we have nurtured—primarily but not exclusively with the Palestinian Christian churches, institutions, and community—that the systems of discrimination and oppression have widened and deepened over the course of the occupation, with no end in sight. The conditions under which Palestinians live—including generations of refugees living in the occupied territories, neighboring countries, and beyond—have only devolved. The suffering has been witnessed by many in our churches who have made pilgrimage visits to the lands of our Christian faith’s history, and who stand in solidarity sisters and brothers of Abrahamic faith heritage by seeking justice, peace, and equality of rights.

The Psalmist asked, “How long, O Lord?” We also ask, how long can this occupation continue, and how long can the dignity and rights of the Palestinian people be denied? As we call for an end to the occupation, we look to the scriptural imperative of a year of jubilee: “You shall hallow the fiftieth year and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants.” (Lev. 25:10). We reaffirm our commitments to seeking a resolution to this enduring and asymmetric conflict, to standing up for justice, and to participating in and supporting non-violent means to attain these goals including, but not limited to, the right to use economic measures to promote justice. We stand in solidarity with our partners in Israel/Palestine who endure the impact of occupation on a daily basis and who work tirelessly to respond to, cope with, and resist the systematic denial of rights and dehumanization which result from unjust policies and practices. We will continue to share the stories and perspectives of those too often ignored or suppressed by mainstream media. We recognize the disproportionate and slanted role that the US government plays in regional politics, and will continue to advocate for positive change which we believe would serve the interests of this country, as well as those of Israelis and Palestinians, and of others within the region.

We pray and yearn for an end to violence in all its forms, and reject and condemn anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim sentiment. We are guided by the premise that the fullness of life is too often subjugated to short-term political or economic interests, but that in the end, such narrow-mindedness is in no one’s ultimate benefit. We trust in God that justice one day will indeed prevail.

“I trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me.” –Psalm 13:5-6.

*Global Ministries is a common witness of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
and United Church of Christ.*