



UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST

Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)

IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA



Global Ministries

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

A Joint Statement in Response to the US “Peace to Prosperity” Proposal

January 31, 2020

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?*

*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: 1-2, 5-6

As President Trump stood with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu on Tuesday to announce the release of the U.S. Administration’s “Peace to Prosperity” proposal to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, our responsible response is one of grave concern. We do not read the 181-page proposal as either realistic or just. We fear for its devastatingly deleterious effects on Palestinian rights, for its implications for international law and institutions, and for the possible consequences on the people living in an already untenable circumstance. We do not see God’s justice in it.

The much-anticipated, and much-delayed, proposal, “Peace to Prosperity: A Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People,” lays out this Administration’s ideas for the resolution of the decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict, one that already exhibits a stark imbalance in power and leverage. The proposal bolsters U.S. support for Israel and its leaders’ vision for claiming as much land as possible while denying the rights of Palestinians, and attempts to impose an outcome, rather than work with all parties. Among other aspects, the proposal:

- Condones Israeli annexation of significant portions of the West Bank, including settlements, making permanent Israeli sovereignty in land illegally occupied according to international law;
- Supports the near-eradication of Palestinian claims to Jerusalem, allowing for the entire city, as well as areas outside of the city limits to remain under Israeli jurisdiction;
- Eliminates the right of return for Palestinian refugees and the dissolution of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) which has provided necessary services for Palestinian refugees since 1949; and
- Puts onerous requirements in place before the people of Gaza can enjoy a semblance of relief from the current Israeli blockade, let alone enjoy political, economic, and human rights.

The framework’s absence of any recognition of Palestinian claims and rights, and ignoring of international law, render this proposal illegitimate. It should be clear that the Trump Administration made no effort to hear or include Palestinian voices in the process of developing the proposal, just as it is eminently clear that Israeli leadership was deeply involved.

We are deeply concerned that Israel will receive the proposal as a declaration and as U.S. permission to take action to implement formally what is outlined. The Knesset is already considering taking a vote on annexation of the West Bank, following the release of the proposal. Any such Israeli action would be in direct contravention of international law and conventions, and would undermine the possibility of a solution based on principles of justice, peace, and rights for all. No matter what actions the Israeli government might take following the release of the proposal, it is clear that the Trump Administration continues to flaunt and ignore principles and structures of international law and institutions developed to promote peacemaking and to uphold law and justice for all people. This pattern of putting self-interest above the common good is deeply troubling, even as we do not believe it is in the interest of those whose privilege it seeks to preserve and enhance.

We are also deeply skeptical that the release of the proposal has anything to do with a sincere effort to resolve the conflict. Given the timing of the announcement this week, we believe it is intended to influence Israeli elections—ironic since the U.S. claims to be deeply concerned about outside interference in U.S. elections—and to leverage the support of U.S. Christian Zionists, who have already voiced support for the proposal, for the U.S. election this fall.

Finally, we wish to be clear that this proposal does not represent the hopes and vision of all American Christians, and certainly not ours or that of our churches, who have been deeply engaged in supporting a just and lasting peace in the Middle East for decades, who have nurtured mission relationships with Palestinian Christians and others for more than a century, and who understand God’s love and justice to be offered for every person, and especially for the oppressed.

We will continue to support efforts to pursue a just peace and respect the dignity, rights, and value of every person—Israelis and Palestinians; Jews, Christians, and Muslims—within the context of international law and justice, and will continue to stand with those who have already suffered too much in the land often called “holy.” We yearn for our country’s leaders and policy to align with those principles. We know that the wait for justice and peace is long, and the pain is deep, yet we trust in God’s steadfast love, knowing that God deals bountifully with God’s people.

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