Recommendations and Resolutions 2010 – Part II

Items 17 - 30

Item 17

Recommendation to Change Wording in Abuse Prevention Document

Submitted by Kelly Newell, Conference Coordinator of Youth and Camping Ministries

Fiscal Impact: None

Background

The Department of Young People's Ministries of the California-Nevada Conference recommends a change in the wording of the title for our conference abuse prevention policy. The change of wording is based on a recommendation from the office of Young People's Ministries from the General Board of Discipleship and was affirmed by the Cabinet of the California Nevada Conference.

It has been recommended that we remove the word policy and substitute guidelines. So that the document approved by the Annual Conference is titled "Abuse Prevention Guidelines" instead of "Abuse Prevention Policy".

The rational for this title changes rests with the implication and liability the word "policy" brings to the procedures set forth in our document. Using the word Policy implies both in content and legally, that it would be the Conference's responsibility to manage and monitor compliance from all churches and entities within the Conference. The use of the word "Guidelines" implies that there are procedures in place at the Conference level, and recommends application and implementation at the local church level and for all entities within the Conference that work with children, youth and vulnerable adults.

It is not practically possible for the Conference to actively and effectively manage and monitor local church compliance with our Abuse Prevention safeguards. Using the word "Guidelines" would lower the risk of the Conference from being held responsible and liable for the non-compliance by a local church or entity.

Recommendation

That the title of the Conference abuse prevention document be changed from “Abuse Prevention Policy” to “Abuse Prevention Guidelines” and that all references in the document be changed from policy to guidelines.

Item 18

Recommendation to Sell Golden Gate District Parsonage

Submitted by the Conference Board of Trustees
Number on agency: 12; Number present when voting: 9
Voting for: 9; Voting Against: 0; Abstaining: 0;
Adopted: February 13, 2010

And by the Council on Finance and Administration
Number on agency: 17; Number present when voting: 10;
Voting for: 10; Voting Against: 0; Abstaining: 0;
Adopted: February 16, 2010

Be it Resolved that:

a) the Conference Board of Trustees is hereby authorized to sell the Golden Gate District parsonage in accordance with ¶2515 of the Book of Discipline, and that

b) proceeds will be used to satisfy the mortgage debt on the United Methodist Center and the Episcopal residence, thereby removing these costs from the conference apportionment budget.

Item 19

CONFRONTING HETEROSEXISM

Submitted by Rev. Stephen Lee, Rev. John Oda, Rev. Karen Oliveto, Bruce Pettit, John Reynolds, Doug Sibley, Fran Smith, and Doris Young

Contact: Bruce Pettit, brudunpet@mac.com

Financial Impact: NA

Background:

Many of our local churches seek new ways to expand their ministries as they face changes in the communities they serve. At the same time, many youth and young adults in California and Nevada reject discrimination against gay men, lesbians, bisexual and transgendered people by the church, limiting the evangelistic ministry of churches in transitional communities.

¶ 212.2 of the **2008 Book of Discipline** states:

In communities of transition, the local church shall be regarded as a principal base of mission from which structures of society shall be confronted, evangelization shall occur, and a principal witness to the changing community shall be realized.

RESOLVED, by the California-Nevada Annual Conference: To the youth and young adults of the states of California and Nevada, we say: "Come join us!" We need your clarity and energy as we realize the goal of every local church to become a base for the mission of confronting unjust heterosexist structures, including those within our own church, and embracing people long told they are not welcome at church. We profoundly disagree with policies of the church universal and of our society that limit full inclusion.

ITEM 20

RESOLUTION ON FAIR SENTENCING FOR YOUTH

submitted by the Conference Board of Church and Society as voted upon on March 6, 2010 by a vote of 9 aye, 0 opposed, 0 abstain; Board attendance at vote 9;

Contact: Susan Griffin. Fiscal Impact: Negligible.

BACKGROUND:

The Social Principles on the Issue of Restorative Justice
The Social Principles call for questioning a criminal justice system that is retributive, and calls for restorative justice which "[t]hrough God's transforming power . . . . seeks to repair the damage, right the wrong, and bring healing to all involved, including the victim, the offender, the families and the community". SB399 is in line with this principle.

Existing Law
Existing law allows youth to be sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole under California Penal Code §190.5 and various other Penal Code sections. Existing law under Penal Code §1170(d) permits resentencing only upon the recommendation of the secretary or the Board of Parole Hearings.

The SB399 Bill
The Fair Sentences for Youth Act recognizes that all young people, even those serving life sentences, have the capacity to change for the better and should have access to the rehabilitative tools to do so. This Act would provide an opportunity for review and resentencing after ten years or more of incarceration for youth sentenced to life without parole in prison. Recognizing that teenagers are still maturing, this Act creates specific criteria and an intense, three-part review process that would result in the possibility of a lesser sentence for those offenders who have matured and proven themselves to have changed. Under this Act, youth offenders serving life sentences first would have to submit a petition to the sentencing court showing they have met certain criteria. Those offenders who are found to have met the criteria would have the opportunity for a resentencing hearing. Not all youth would get a new sentencing hearing, and those who did would have no guarantee of getting a lesser sentence. Even if resentenced, most offenders will still face a parole board and must prove they merit parole. Otherwise, they will remain in prison. There would be no guarantee of parole, only the opportunity to earn it.

Life sentences ignore that young people have a unique ability to change
Youth can and do commit terrible crimes. When they do, they should be held accountable and face appropriate punishment. But youth are different from adults; youth have a greater capacity

for rehabilitation. Young people continue to develop their identity and the direction of their lives into their early twenties. Recent findings in neuroscience confirm what many parents and teachers have long known: brain maturation is a process that continues through adolescence and into early adulthood, and impulse control, planning, and thinking ahead are skills still in development well beyond age 18. In addition, there is widespread agreement among child development researchers that young people who commit crimes are more likely to reform their behavior and have a better chance at rehabilitation than adults. The Supreme Court agrees—In *Roper v. Simmons*, 543 U.S. 551 (2005) the Court explained, "From a moral standpoint it would be misguided to equate the failings of a minor with those of an adult, for a greater possibility exists that a minor's character deficiencies will be reformed." No one can know definitively what kind of person a 14, 15, 16, or 17-year-old will become. Therefore, it is appropriate to provide youth with meaningful and periodic reviews of their life sentences to ensure that those who can prove they have reformed are given an opportunity to re-enter society as contributing citizens.

Life sentences for youth do not reduce crime

Evidence shows that these sentences provide little or no real deterrent effect. California's arrest rate for violent crimes by youth is higher than many other states, including states that do not sentence children to life without parole.

No real chance for rehabilitation

When youth are sentenced to life without parole not only do they have no opportunity for release, they are often left without access to programs and rehabilitative services while in prison. These sentences were created to punish the worst of criminals who have no possibility of reform. While the crimes they committed resulted in suffering, youth offenders should be given a real chance to redeem themselves.

California's laws should be more just; juveniles who commit crimes should be sentenced appropriately for the crime. But we should preserve the opportunity to review whether a person sentenced to life in prison as a child has been rehabilitated, and we should recognize that many youth receiving this sentence were convicted for a murder in which they played a minor role.

RESOLUTION:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the California-Nevada Annual Conference will write the federal and state legislators asking them to support SB 399 which provides for elimination of the sentence of "life without possibility of parole" (LWOP) for offenders under the age of 18, and provides for a review of previously sentences of LWOP at a time when the offender was under the age of 18 under specific circumstances and at specific times.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that each church in our annual conference will encourage its members to contact their elected state and federal representatives asking them to support SB399.

ITEM 21

RESOLUTION ON HUMANE 2010-2011 CALIFORNIA STATE BUDGET

submitted by the Conference Board of Church and Society as voted upon on March 6, 2010 by a vote of 9 aye, 0 opposed, 0 abstain; Board attendance at vote 9;

Contact: Brian Marks. Fiscal Impact: None.

BACKGROUND:

The state budget for California has been cut dramatically over the past two years. The budget for 2007-08 budget year was approximately $130 billion. On January 8, 2010 Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger unveiled an $82.9 billion state spending plan for fiscal year 2010-2011 that called for no tax increases but envisions pay cuts for state workers, reductions in services to California's neediest residents and relies on the benevolence of the federal government.

As the Governor and California state legislators grapple not only with the Governor's proposed budget for 2010 – 2011 but also with a current budget short-fall of approximately $20 billion, as the church we need to do all that we can to protect our neediest citizens – the poor, the widows, the homeless, the elderly and our children.

RESOLUTION:

BE IT RESOLVED that the California – Nevada Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church will encourage all of its churches and members to contact the California Governor and their state legislators requesting that they make no ~~more~~ cuts to services currently being provided to our neediest citizens – the poor, the widows, the homeless, the elderly and the children. Contact can be made by phone calls, letters, emails, and personal contact.

ITEM 22

RESOLUTION ON HEALTH CARE REFORM

submitted by the Conference Board of Church and Society as voted upon on March 6, 2010 by a vote of 9 aye, 0 opposed, 0 abstain; Board attendance at vote 9;

Contact: Margo Tenold. Fiscal Impact: Negligible.

BACKGROUND:

In the Bible Jesus heals many people. He never asks if they can afford to pay him. He never asks if their difficulty is a pre-existing condition. He never even asks where they were born before he decides whether to heal them or not. In fact he heals the Roman centurion's servant, the Gerasene demoniac, the ten Samaritan lepers as well as many Jews.

In following the example of Jesus, the 2008 General Conference passed Resolution 3201, *Health Care for All in the United States*. In this resolution, the General Conference calls for single payer health care so that each person will receive the health care they need, regardless of their wealth, pre-existing conditions or their place of birth. The General Board of Church and Society has named health care reform at the top of its list of legislative priorities for 2010.

RESOLUTION:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Secretary on behalf of the California-Nevada Annual Conference will write the federal and state legislators asking them to support single payer health care reform or at least health care reform with a public option.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that each church in our annual conference will encourage its members to contact their elected state and federal representatives asking them to back health care reform that is affordable, accessible, inclusive and accountable.

Item 23

RECOMMENDATION TO CHANGE STANDING RULES REGARDING PRINTING AND DISTRIBUTING CONFERENCE JOURNALS

Submitted by: Council on Finance and Administration
Number on agency: 17; Number present when voting: 10; Number voting for: 10; Number voting against: 0; Number abstaining: 0; Date adopted: March 20, 2010

Endorsed by Kristin Sachen, Conference Secretary

Background: The Council on Finance and Administration held an emergency meeting on January 29, 2009 for the purpose of cutting the conference's 2009 budgeted spending. The meeting was necessitated by lower than expected apportionment collections for the year ending 12/31/08. The goal of the meeting was to cut spending to match the level of apportionment collections for each apportionment category. The conference journal is funded from the "Conference Office and Administration" apportionment item, for which collections in 2008 had fallen $113,558 or 10% from the 2007 level. The budgeted amount for the conference journal and secretary was cut from $28,000 to $6,361, removing the funding for printing and distribution of the journal by UMR Communications. The task of creating and distributing CDs was shifted to staff.

Collections on the "Conference Office and Administration" apportionment item fell by another $123,297 in 2009, therefore restoring the funding for printing and distributing of the conference journal does not seem feasible. The Council and the Conference Secretary hope to find a vendor from whom individuals can order a printed version of the journal at their own expense.

Therefore, it is recommended that the following changes to the Standing Rules be adopted:

Division II. A. Conference Journal

1. When certified by the Bishop and the Secretary, the Journal shall be the official record of the Conference. The 1971 Journal contains a complete listing of former EUB and Methodist churches.
2. The Journal Editor shall be responsible for receiving copy from the Conference Secretary, agencies and officers for the compiling, editing, and distribution of the Journal.
~~3. Copy for the Journal must be in the hands of the Conference Secretary no later than one week after the adjournment of the Annual Conference Session.~~
4. The Conference Journal shall be published in two formats, in printed form and on computer files distributed on CD. **The printed format shall be made available for purchase.** ~~The entire Journal shall be published each year in CD format. In addition, the printed portion of the Journal which is bound and distributed to members shall include, in addition to other materials, the~~

~~Business Questions of the Annual Conference, the adopted recommendations of the Conference Board of Pensions, and the following financial reports:~~
~~a. The Conference apportionment budget as approved for the coming year, with accompanying notes, and with a comparison to the apportionment budget approved for the preceding fiscal year;~~
~~b. The Financial Reports of the Council on Finance, the Board of Pensions, the Board of Trustees, the Board of Missions, the **Board of Camp and Retreat Ministries** Discipleship, the Conference Claimants Endowment Board, and the United Methodist Foundation.~~
5. Distribution:
a. One **CD** copy to each of the following: Clergy members and other clergy under appointment; probationary members; lay members; alternate lay members who are seated within the bar of the Conference and sign roll call cards; delegates of the youth and young adult delegations who are seated within the bar, sign roll cards, and request one in writing; churches for office and library use; and Conference claimants;
b. Three **printed** copies to the Conference Archives and copies to such other regional archives **and general church agencies** as request and justify a need for it;
c. ~~Three~~ **One CD** ~~copies~~ **copy** to each member of the basic professional and other Conference staff;
d. One **CD** copy each to lay chairpersons of Conference agencies for which the Conference Nominating Committee has nominating responsibility and agencies for which the Conference has accepted Advance Special responsibility;
e. One **CD** copy to each lay member of Conference Legislation and Nominating Committees;
f. One **CD** copy, on request, to each lay District Coordinator who would not receive a copy under other provisions.
g. ~~Additional copies, over the number specified above, may be ordered by Conference members, alternate members, and by representatives of agencies reporting to the Annual Conference. Orders for these additional copies shall be received by the Conference Secretary before the adjournment of the Annual Conference Session. Payment in full, at the per copy rate set by the Conference Secretary, must accompany each order. Others may be purchased from the Cokesbury Book Store.~~
6. Each local church shall maintain a file of Conference Journals, and it is the responsibility of the pastor to make sure that ~~this is done~~.

Item 24

Recommendation to Request Reconsideration by The Judicial Council of its Decision on its Own Motion

Submitted by United Methodist Church of Davis

A total of twenty-four members of the Church Council voted on this resolution on March 17, 2010. All 24 voted yes. No one voted against and no one abstained;

Contact: Helen Roland, hroland@earthlink.net 530-756-3972

Fiscal impact: None

The California-Nevada Annual Conference Petitions the Judicial Council of The United Methodist Church, pursuant to Judicial Council Rule Of Practice VIII A, to reconsider Judicial Council Decision 1032 as follows:

The Judicial Council Rules Of Practice Provide that, "whenever a decision of the Judicial Council is shown clearly to be in error, or in order to prevent a manifest injustice resulting from the interpretation of a Judicial Council decision, the Judicial Council on its own motion ... may, by a majority vote, reconsider any ruling or action taken by it." [Judicial Council Rules Of Practice VIII. A.]

On October 25, 2005, in Decision 1 032, the Judicial Council upheld denial by a pastor of membership in The United Methodist Church based on the prospective member's homosexual status.

Decision 1032 contradicts Article IV of the Constitution of The United Methodist Church and Paragraph 139 of The United Methodist Church.

Decision l032 "compromises the historic understanding that the Church is open to all. The Judicial Council cannot interpret something that is not stated in the Discipline. Nothing in the Discipline gives pastors discretion to exclude persons presenting themselves for membership in the Church. (See ¶4 and ¶13[9])" [Henry-Crowe Dissent from JCD 1032, l0/29/2005]

"I find nothing in the Discipline or in the whole of our jurisprudence that suggests that this issue has ever been addressed. The Discipline is silent on the issue ... .It is the equivalent of ideological legerdemain for the Judicial Council to declare "discretion" where there is none and to grant pastors "responsible pastoral judgment" where the General Conference has not done so." [Gray Dissent from JCD 1032, 11/8/05]

"The majority's decision [in 1032] now condones the denial of the fellowship of the church to persons in need of its ministry and guidance who are homosexual. The decision eviscerates our statement that God's grace is available to all and reduces it to an empty platitude. More tragically, the same Judicial Council charged with giving effect to the intent of the enactments of the General Conference has turned a cold and rejecting ear to its plea that families and churches not reject lesbian and gay members and friends." [Gray Dissent from JCD 1032, 11/8/05, *citing* ¶161(g), now ¶161(f)]

Decision 1032 now even more clearly contradicts Paragraph 225 of the 2008 Book Of Discipline, in which the General Conference strengthened the already permissive open invitation to membership in The United Methodist Church. [*See*, Gray Dissent from JCD 032, 11/8/05, "The permissive language contained in paragraphs 214 through 225 is an invitation to persons who seek membership."]

Decision 1032 has been shown clearly to be in error in that it is still true that no provision of the Book Of Discipline authorizes or directs denial of membership as permitted by Decision 1032, and because the General Conference increased the permissive invitation to membership by revising ¶225 to state that "A member in good standing in any Christian denomination who has been baptized and who desires to unite with The United Methodist Church **shall** [emphasis added] be received as either a baptized or a professing member."

Manifest injustice has and will continue to result from interpretation and application of Decision 1032 to deny persons membership in The United Methodist Church.

The California-Nevada Annual Conference therefore requests that the Judicial Council on its own motion and pursuant to its standing Rules Of Practice (VIII. A) reconsider Decision 1032, issue a new Decision finding that Decision 1032 is null and void, and direct that any prospective members denied membership in The United Methodist Church as a result of Decision 1032 be granted admission.

Item 25

Resolution Commending the Kairos Palestine Document

Submitted by Board of Missions Israel/Palestine Task Force

11 members: 9 present, 9 voting For, 0 Against, 0 Abstaining

Adopted March 18, 2010

Contact person: John Chamberlin

Financial Impact: None

BE IT RESOLVED that the 2010 Session of the California-Nevada Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, having passed a resolution initiating a process of divestment from corporations that "support in a significant way the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories," commends the Kairos Palestine Document (below) to our local congregations for use as a resource for instruction and advocacy. We make this commendation in solidarity with Christian leaders in Palestine and Israel who issued this prophetic call and who see boycott, divestment, and sanctions as effective ways for people and institutions in civil society nonviolently to resist the Israeli military occupation of Palestinian land, which is understood theologically as "a sin against God and humanity because it deprives the Palestinians of their basic human rights, bestowed by God."

KAIROS PALESTINE|2009

A moment of truth:

A word of faith, hope and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering

Introduction

We, a group of Christian Palestinians, after prayer, reflection and an exchange of opinion, cry out from within the suffering in our country, under the Israeli occupation, with a cry of hope in the absence of all hope, a cry full of prayer and faith in a God ever vigilant, in God's divine providence for all the inhabitants of this land. Inspired by the mystery of God's love for all, the mystery of God's divine presence in the history of all peoples and, in a particular way, in the history of our country, we proclaim our word based on our Christian faith and our sense of Palestinian belonging – a word of faith, hope and love.

Why now? Because today we have reached a dead end in the tragedy of the Palestinian people. The decision-makers content themselves with managing the crisis rather than committing themselves to the serious task of finding a way to resolve it. The hearts of the faithful are filled with pain and with questioning: What is the international community doing? What are the political leaders in Palestine, in Israel and in the Arab world doing? What is the Church doing? The problem is not just a political one. It is a policy in which human beings are destroyed, and this must be of concern to the Church.

We address ourselves to our brothers and sisters, members of our Churches in this land. We call out as Christians and as Palestinians to our religious and political leaders, to our Palestinian society and to the Israeli society, to the international community, and to our Christian brothers and sisters in the Churches around the world .

1. The reality on the ground

1.1 *"They say: 'Peace, peace' when there is no peace"* (Jer. 6:14). These days, everyone is speaking about peace in the Middle East and the peace process. So far, however, these are simply words; the reality is one of Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories, deprivation of our freedom and all that results from this situation:

1.1.1 The separation wall erected on Palestinian territory, a large part of which has been confiscated for this purpose, has turned our towns and villages into prisons, separating them from one another, making them dispersed and divided cantons. Gaza, especially

after the cruel war Israel launched against it during December 2008 and January 2009, continues to live in inhuman conditions, under permanent blockade and cut off from the other Palestinian territories .

1.1.2 Israeli settlements ravage our land in the name of God and in the name of force, controlling our natural resources, including water and agricultural land, thus depriving hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, and constituting an obstacle to any political solution.

1.1.3 Reality is the daily humiliation to which we are subjected at the military checkpoints, as we make our way to jobs, schools or hospitals.

1.1.4 Reality is the separation between members of the same family, making family life impossible for thousands of Palestinians, especially where one of the spouses does not have an Israeli identity card.

1.1.5 Religious liberty is severely restricted; the freedom of access to the holy places is denied under the pretext of security. Jerusalem and its holy places are out of bounds for many Christians and Muslims from the West Bank and the Gaza strip. Even Jerusalemites face restrictions during the religious feasts. Some of our Arab clergy are regularly barred from entering Jerusalem .

1.1.6 Refugees are also part of our reality. Most of them are still living in camps under difficult circumstances. They have been waiting for their right of return, generation after generation. What will be their fate?

1.1.7 And the prisoners? The thousands of prisoners languishing in Israeli prisons are part of our reality. The Israelis move heaven and earth to gain the release of one prisoner, and those thousands of Palestinian prisoners, when will they have their freedom?

1.1.8 Jerusalem is the heart of our reality. It is, at the same time, symbol of peace and sign of conflict. While the separation wall divides Palestinian neighbourhoods, Jerusalem continues to be emptied of its Palestinian citizens, Christians and Muslims. Their identity cards are confiscated, which means the loss of their right to reside in Jerusalem. Their homes are demolished or expropriated. Jerusalem, city of reconciliation, has become a city of discrimination and exclusion, a source of struggle rather than peace .

1.2 Also part of this reality is the Israeli disregard of international law and international resolutions, as well as the paralysis of the Arab world and the international community in the face of this contempt. Human rights are violated and despite the various reports of local and international human rights' organizations, the injustice continues.

1.2.1 Palestinians within the State of Israel, who have also suffered a historical injustice, although they are citizens and have the rights and obligations of citizenship, still suffer from discriminatory policies. They too are waiting to enjoy full rights and equality like all other citizens in the state.

1.3 Emigration is another element in our reality. The absence of any vision or spark of hope for peace and freedom pushes young people, both Muslim and Christian, to emigrate. Thus the land is deprived of its most important and richest resource – educated youth. The shrinking number of Christians, particularly in Palestine, is one of the dangerous consequences, both of this conflict, and of the local and international paralysis and failure to find a comprehensive solution to the problem.

1.4 In the face of this reality, Israel justifies its actions as self-defence, including occupation, collective punishment and all other forms of reprisals against the Palestinians. In our opinion, this vision is a reversal of reality. Yes, there is Palestinian resistance to the occupation. However, if there were no occupation, there would be no resistance, no fear and no insecurity. This is our understanding of the situation. Therefore, we call on the Israelis to end the occupation. Then they will see a new world in which there is no fear, no threat but rather security, justice and peace.

1.5 The Palestinian response to this reality was diverse. Some responded through negotiations: that was the official position of the Palestinian Authority, but it did not advance the peace process. Some political parties followed the way of armed resistance. Israel used this as a pretext to accuse the Palestinians of being terrorists and was able to distort the real nature of the conflict, presenting it as an Israeli war against terror, rather than an Israeli occupation faced by Palestinian legal resistance aiming at ending it.

1.5.1 The tragedy worsened with the internal conflict among Palestinians themselves, and with the separation of Gaza from the rest of the Palestinian territory. It is noteworthy that, even though the division is among Palestinians themselves, the international community bears an important responsibility for it since it refused to deal positively with the will of the Palestinian people expressed in the outcome of democratic and legal elections in 2006. Again, we repeat and proclaim that our Christian word in the midst of all this, in the midst of our catastrophe, is a word of faith, hope and love.

2. A word of faith

We believe in one God, a good and just God

2.1 We believe in God, one God, Creator of the universe and of humanity. We believe in a good and just God, who loves each one of his creatures. We believe that every human being is created in God's image and likeness and that every one's dignity is derived from the dignity of the Almighty One. We believe that this dignity is one and the same in each and all of us. This means for us, here and now, in this land in particular, that God created us not so that we might engage in strife and conflict but rather that we might come and know and love one another, and together build up the land in love and mutual respect.

2.1.1 We also believe in God's eternal Word, His only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, whom God sent as the Saviour of the world.

2.1.2 We believe in the Holy Spirit, who accompanies the Church and all humanity on its journey. It is the Spirit that helps us to understand Holy Scripture, both Old and New Testaments, showing their unity, here and now. The Spirit makes manifest the revelation of God to humanity, past, present and future.

How do we understand the word of God?

2.2 We believe that God has spoken to humanity, here in our country: *"Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days God has spoken to us by a Son, whom God appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds"* (Heb. 1:1-2)

2.2.1 We, Christian Palestinians, believe, like all Christians throughout the world, that Jesus Christ came in order to fulfil the Law and the Prophets. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, and in his light and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we read the Holy Scriptures. We meditate upon and interpret Scripture just as Jesus Christ did with the two disciples on their way to Emmaus. As it is written in the Gospel according to Saint Luke: *"Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures"* (Lk 24:27)

2.2.2 Our Lord Jesus Christ came, proclaiming that the Kingdom of God was near. He provoked a revolution in the life and faith of all humanity. He came with *"a new teaching"* (Mk 1:27), casting a new light on the Old Testament, on the themes that relate to our Christian faith and our daily lives, themes such as the promises, the election, the people of God and the land. We believe that the Word of God is a living Word, casting a particular light on each period of history, manifesting to Christian believers what God is saying to us here and now. For this reason, it is unacceptable to transform the Word of God into letters of stone that pervert the love of God and His providence in the life of both peoples and individuals. This is precisely the error in fundamentalist Biblical interpretation that brings us death and destruction when the word of God is petrified and transmitted from generation to generation as a dead letter. This dead letter is used as a weapon in our present history in order to deprive us of our rights in our own land.

Our land has a universal mission

2.3 We believe that our land has a universal mission. In this universality, the meaning of the promises, of the land, of the election, of the people of God open up to include all of humanity, starting from all the peoples of this land. In light of the teachings of the Holy Bible, the promise of the land has never been a political programme, but rather the prelude to complete universal salvation. It was the initiation of the fulfilment of the Kingdom of God on earth.

2.3.1 God sent the patriarchs, the prophets and the apostles to this land so that they might carry forth a universal mission to the world. Today we constitute three religions in this land, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Our land is God's land, as is the case with all countries in the world. It is holy inasmuch as God is present in it, for God alone is holy and sanctifier. It is the duty of those of us who live here, to respect the will of God for this land. It is our duty to liberate it from the evil of injustice and war. It is God's land and therefore it must be a land of reconciliation, peace and love. This is indeed possible. God has put us here as two peoples, and God gives us the capacity, if we have the will, to live together and establish in it justice and peace, making it in reality God's land: *"The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it"* (Ps. 24:1).

2.3.2 Our presence in this land, as Christian and Muslim Palestinians, is not accidental but rather deeply rooted in the history and geography of this land, resonant with the connectedness of any other people to the land it lives in. It was an injustice when we were driven out. The West sought to make amends for what Jews had endured in the countries of Europe, but it made

amends on our account and in our land. They tried to correct an injustice and the result was a new injustice.

2.3.3 Furthermore, we know that certain theologians in the West try to attach a biblical and theological legitimacy to the infringement of our rights. Thus, the promises, according to their interpretation, have become a menace to our very existence. The "good news" in the Gospel itself has become "a harbinger of death" for us. We call on these theologians to deepen their reflection on the Word of God and to rectify their interpretations so that they might see in the Word of God a source of life for all peoples.

2.3.4 Our connectedness to this land is a natural right. It is not an ideological or a theological question only. It is a matter of life and death. There are those who do not agree with us, even defining us as enemies only because we declare that we want to live as free people in our land. We suffer from the occupation of our land because we are Palestinians. And as Christian Palestinians we suffer from the wrong interpretation of some theologians. Faced with this, our task is to safeguard the Word of God as a source of life and not of death, so that "the good news" remains what it is, "good news" for us and for all. In face of those who use the Bible to threaten our existence as Christian and Muslim Palestinians, we renew our faith in God because we know that the word of God can not be the source of our destruction.

2.4 Therefore, we declare that any use of the Bible to legitimize or support political options and positions that are based upon injustice, imposed by one person on another, or by one people on another, transform religion into human ideology and strip the Word of God of its holiness, its universality and truth.

2.5 We also declare that the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land is a sin against God and humanity because it deprives the Palestinians of their basic human rights, bestowed by God. It distorts the image of God in the Israeli who has become an occupier just as it distorts this image in the Palestinian living under occupation. We declare that any theology, seemingly based on the Bible or on faith or on history, that legitimizes the occupation, is far from Christian teachings, because it calls for violence and holy war in the name of God Almighty, subordinating God to temporary human interests, and distorting the divine image in the human beings living under both political and theological injustice.

3. Hope

3.1 Despite the lack of even a glimmer of positive expectation, our hope remains strong. The present situation does not promise any quick solution or the end of the occupation that is imposed on us. Yes, the initiatives, the conferences, visits and negotiations have multiplied, but they have not been followed up by any change in our situation and suffering. Even the new US position that has been announced by President Obama, with a manifest desire to put an end to the tragedy, has not been able to make a change in our reality. The clear Israeli response, refusing any solution, leaves no room for positive expectation. Despite this, our hope remains strong, because it is from God. God alone is good, almighty and loving and His goodness will one day be victorious over the evil in which we find ourselves. As Saint Paul said: *"If God is for us, who is against us? (…) Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all day long" (…) For I am convinced that (nothing) in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God"* (Rom. 8:31, 35, 36, 39).

What is the meaning of hope?

3.2 Hope within us means first and foremost our faith in God and secondly our expectation, despite everything, for a better future. Thirdly, it means not chasing after illusions – we realize that release is not close at hand. Hope is the capacity to see God in the midst of trouble, and to be co-workers with the Holy Spirit who is dwelling in us. From this vision derives the strength to be steadfast, remain firm and work to change the reality in which we find ourselves. Hope means not giving in to evil but rather standing up to it and continuing to resist it. We see nothing in the present or future except ruin and destruction. We see the upper hand of the strong, the growing orientation towards racist separation and the imposition of laws that deny our existence and our dignity. We see confusion and division in the Palestinian position. If, despite all this, we do resist this reality today and work hard, perhaps the destruction that looms on the horizon may not come upon us.

Signs of hope

3.3 The Church in our land, her leaders and her faithful, despite her weakness and her divisions, does show certain signs of hope. Our parish communities are vibrant and most of our young people are active apostles for justice and peace. In addition to the individual commitment, our various Church institutions make our faith active and present in service, love and prayer.

3.3.1 Among the signs of hope are the local centres of theology, with a religious and social character. They are numerous in our different Churches. The ecumenical spirit, even if still hesitant, shows itself more and more in the meetings of our different Church families.

3.3.2 We can add to this the numerous meetings for inter-religious dialogue, Christian–Muslim dialogue, which includes the religious leaders and a part of the people. Admittedly, dialogue is a long process and is perfected through a daily effort as we undergo the same sufferings and have the same expectations. There is also dialogue among the three religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, as well as different dialogue meetings on the academic or social level. They all try to breach the walls imposed by the occupation and oppose the distorted perception of human beings in the heart of their brothers or sisters.

3.3.3 One of the most important signs of hope is the steadfastness of the generations, the belief in the justice of their cause and the continuity of memory, which does not forget the “Nakba” (catastrophe) and its significance. Likewise significant is the developing awareness among many Churches throughout the world and their desire to know the truth about what is going on here.

3.3.4 In addition to that, we see a determination among many to overcome the resentments of the past and to be ready for reconciliation once justice has been restored. Public awareness of the need to restore political rights to the Palestinians is increasing, and Jewish and Israeli voices, advocating peace and justice, are raised in support of this with the approval of the international community. True, these forces for justice and reconciliation have not yet been able to transform the situation of injustice, but they have their influence and may shorten the time of suffering and hasten the time of reconciliation.

The mission of the Church

3.4 Our Church is a Church of people who pray and serve. This prayer and service is

prophetic, bearing the voice of God in the present and future. Everything that happens in our land, everyone who lives there, all the pains and hopes, all the injustice and all the efforts to stop this injustice, are part and parcel of the prayer of our Church and the service of all her institutions. Thanks be to God that our Church raises her voice against injustice despite the fact that some desire her to remain silent, closed in her religious devotions.

3.4.1 The mission of the Church is prophetic, to speak the Word of God courageously, honestly and lovingly in the local context and in the midst of daily events. If she does take sides, it is with the oppressed, to stand alongside them, just as Christ our Lord stood by the side of each poor person and each sinner, calling them to repentance, life, and the restoration of the dignity bestowed on them by God and that no one has the right to strip away.

3.4.2 The mission of the Church is to proclaim the Kingdom of God, a kingdom of justice, peace and dignity. Our vocation as a living Church is to bear witness to the goodness of God and the dignity of human beings. We are called to pray and to make our voice heard when we announce a new society where human beings believe in their own dignity and the dignity of their adversaries.

3.4.3 Our Church points to the Kingdom, which cannot be tied to any earthly kingdom. Jesus said before Pilate that he was indeed a king but *"my kingdom is not from this world"* (Jn 18:36). Saint Paul says: *"The Kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit"* (Rom.14:17). Therefore, religion cannot favour or support any unjust political regime, but must rather promote justice, truth and human dignity. It must exert every effort to purify regimes where human beings suffer injustice and human dignity is violated. The Kingdom of God on earth is not dependent on any political orientation, for it is greater and more inclusive than any particular political system.

3.4.4 Jesus Christ said: *"The Kingdom of God is among you"* (Luke 17:21). This Kingdom that is present among us and in us is the extension of the mystery of salvation. It is the presence of God among us and our sense of that presence in everything we do and say. It is in this divine presence that we shall do what we can until justice is achieved in this land.

3.4.5 The cruel circumstances in which the Palestinian Church has lived and continues to live have required the Church to clarify her faith and to identify her vocation better. We have studied our vocation and have come to know it better in the midst of suffering and pain: today, we bear the strength of love rather than that of revenge, a culture of life rather than a culture of death. This is a source of hope for us, for the Church and for the world.

3.5 The Resurrection is the source of our hope. Just as Christ rose in victory over death and evil, so too we are able, as each inhabitant of this land is able, to vanquish the evil of war. We will remain a witnessing, steadfast and active Church in the land of the Resurrection.

4. Love

The commandment of love

4.1 Christ our Lord said: *"Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another"* (Jn 13:34). He has already showed us how to love and how to treat our enemies. He said: *"You have heard that it was said,*

'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous (…) Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:45-47). Saint Paul also said: *"Do not repay anyone evil for evil"* (Rom. 12:17). And Saint Peter said: *"Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but on the contrary, repay with a blessing. It is for this that you were called"* (1 Pet. 3:9).

Resistance

4.2 This word is clear. Love is the commandment of Christ our Lord to us and it includes both friends and enemies. This must be clear when we find ourselves in circumstances where we must resist evil of whatever kind.

4.2.1 Love is seeing the face of God in every human being. Every person is my brother or my sister. However, seeing the face of God in everyone does not mean accepting evil or aggression on their part. Rather, this love seeks to correct the evil and stop the aggression. The aggression against the Palestinian people which is the Israeli occupation, is an evil that must be resisted. It is an evil and a sin that must be resisted and removed. Primary responsibility for this rests with the Palestinians themselves suffering occupation. Christian love invites us to resist it. However, love puts an end to evil by walking in the ways of justice. Responsibility lies also with the international community, because international law regulates relations between peoples today. Finally responsibility lies with the perpetrators of the injustice; they must liberate themselves from the evil that is in them and the injustice they have imposed on others.

4.2.2 When we review the history of the nations, we see many wars and much resistance to war by war, to violence by violence. The Palestinian people has gone the way of the peoples, particularly in the first stages of its struggle with the Israeli occupation. However, it also engaged in peaceful struggle, especially during the first Intifada. We recognize that all peoples must find a new way in their relations with each other and the resolution of their conflicts. The ways of force must give way to the ways of justice. This applies above all to the peoples that are militarily strong, mighty enough to impose their injustice on the weaker.

4.2.3 We say that our option as Christians in the face of the Israeli occupation is to resist. Resistance is a right and a duty for the Christian. But it is resistance with love as its logic. It is thus a creative resistance for it must find human ways that engage the humanity of the enemy. Seeing the image of God in the face of the enemy means taking up positions in the light of this vision of active resistance to stop the injustice and oblige the perpetrator to end his aggression and thus achieve the desired goal, which is getting back the land, freedom, dignity and independence.

4.2.4 Christ our Lord has left us an example we must imitate. We must resist evil but he taught us that we cannot resist evil with evil. This is a difficult commandment, particularly when the enemy is determined to impose himself and deny our right to remain here in our land. It is a difficult commandment yet it alone can stand firm in the face of the clear declarations of the occupation authorities that refuse our existence and the many excuses these authorities use to continue imposing occupation upon us.

4.2.5 Resistance to the evil of occupation is integrated, then, within this Christian love that refuses evil and corrects it. It resists evil in all its forms with methods that enter into

the logic of love and draw on all energies to make peace. We can resist through civil disobedience. We do not resist with death but rather through respect of life. We respect and have a high esteem for all those who have given their life for our nation. And we affirm that every citizen must be ready to defend his or her life, freedom and land.

4.2.6 Palestinian civil organizations, as well as international organizations, NGOs and certain religious institutions call on individuals, companies and states to engage in divestment and in an economic and commercial boycott of everything produced by the occupation. We understand this to integrate the logic of peaceful resistance. These advocacy campaigns must be carried out with courage, openly sincerely proclaiming that their object is not revenge but rather to put an end to the existing evil, liberating both the perpetrators and the victims of injustice. The aim is to free both peoples from extremist positions of the different Israeli governments, bringing both to justice and reconciliation. In this spirit and with this dedication we will eventually reach the longed-for resolution to our problems, as indeed happened in South Africa and with many other liberation movements in the world.

4.3 Through our love, we will overcome injustices and establish foundations for a new society both for us and for our opponents. Our future and their future are one. Either the cycle of violence that destroys both of us or peace that will benefit both. We call on Israel to give up its injustice towards us, not to twist the truth of reality of the occupation by pretending that it is a battle against terrorism. The roots of "terrorism" are in the human injustice committed and in the evil of the occupation. These must be removed if there be a sincere intention to remove "terrorism". We call on the people of Israel to be our partners in peace and not in the cycle of interminable violence. Let us resist evil together, the evil of occupation and the infernal cycle of violence.

5. Our word to our brothers and sisters

5.1 We all face, today, a way that is blocked and a future that promises only woe. Our word to all our Christian brothers and sisters is a word of hope, patience, steadfastness and new action for a better future. Our word is that we, as Christians we carry a message, and we will continue to carry it despite the thorns, despite blood and daily difficulties. We place our hope in God, who will grant us relief in His own time. At the same time, we continue to act in concord with God and God's will, building, resisting evil and bringing closer the day of justice and peace.

5.2 We say to our Christian brothers and sisters: This is a time for repentance. Repentance brings us back into the communion of love with everyone who suffers, the prisoners, the wounded, those afflicted with temporary or permanent handicaps, the children who cannot live their childhood and each one who mourns a dear one. The communion of love says to every believer in spirit and in truth: if my brother is a prisoner I am a prisoner; if his home is destroyed, my home is destroyed; when my brother is killed, then I too am killed. We face the same challenges and share in all that has happened and will happen. Perhaps, as individuals or as heads of Churches, we were silent when we should have raised our voices to condemn the injustice and share in the suffering. This is a time of repentance for our silence, indifference, lack of communion, either because we did not persevere in our mission in this land and abandoned it, or because we did not think and do enough to reach a new and integrated vision and remained divided, contradicting our witness and weakening our word. Repentance for our concern with our institutions, sometimes at the expense of our mission, thus silencing the prophetic voice given by the Spirit to the Churches.

5.3 We call on Christians to remain steadfast in this time of trial, just as we have throughout the centuries, through the changing succession of states and governments. Be patient, steadfast and full of hope so that you might fill the heart of every one of your brothers or sisters who shares in this same trial with hope. *"Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you"* (1 Pet. 3:15). Be active and, provided this conforms to love, participate in any sacrifice that resistance asks of you to overcome our present travail ..

5.4 Our numbers are few but our message is great and important. Our land is in urgent need of love. Our love is a message to the Muslim and to the Jew, as well as to the world.

5.4.1 Our message to the Muslims is a message of love and of living together and a call to reject fanaticism and extremism. It is also a message to the world that Muslims are neither to be stereotyped as the enemy nor caricatured as terrorists but rather to be lived with in peace and engaged with in dialogue.

5.4.2 Our message to the Jews tells them: Even though we have fought one another in the recent past and still struggle today, we are able to love and live together. We can organize our political life, with all its complexity, according to the logic of this love and its power, after ending the occupation and establishing justice.

5.4.3 The word of faith says to anyone engaged in political activity: human beings were not made for hatred. It is not permitted to hate, neither is it permitted to kill or to be killed. The culture of love is the culture of accepting the other. Through it we perfect ourselves and the foundations of society are established.

6. Our word to the Churches of the world

6.1 Our word to the Churches of the world is firstly a word of gratitude for the solidarity you have shown toward us in word, deed and presence among us. It is a word of praise for the many Churches and Christians who support the right of the Palestinian people for self determination. It is a message of solidarity with those Christians and Churches who have suffered because of their advocacy for law and justice. However, it is also a call to repentance; to revisit fundamentalist theological positions that support certain unjust political options with regard to the Palestinian people. It is a call to stand alongside the oppressed and preserve the word of God as good news for all rather than to turn it into a weapon with which to slay the oppressed. The word of God is a word of love for all His creation. God is not the ally of one against the other, nor the opponent of one in the face of the other. God is the Lord of all and loves all, demanding justice from all and issuing to all of us the same commandments. We ask our sister Churches not to offer a theological cover-up for the injustice we suffer, for the sin of the occupation imposed upon us. Our question to our brothers and sisters in the Churches today is: Are you able to help us get our freedom back, for this is the only way you can help the two peoples attain justice, peace, security and love?

6.2 In order to understand our reality, we say to the Churches: Come and see. We will fulfil our role to make known to you the truth of our reality, receiving you as pilgrims coming to us to pray, carrying a message of peace, love and reconciliation. You will know the facts and the people of this land, Palestinians and Israelis alike.

6.3 We condemn all forms of racism, whether religious or ethnic, including anti- Semitism and Islamophobia, and we call on you to condemn it and oppose it in all its manifestations. At the same time we call on you to say a word of truth and to take a position of truth with regard to Israel's occupation of Palestinian land. As we have already said, we see boycott and disinvestment as tools of non violence for justice, peace and security for all.

7. Our word to the international community

7. Our word to the international community is to stop the principle of "double standards" and insist on the international resolutions regarding the Palestinian problem with regard to all parties. Selective application of international law threatens to leave us vulnerable to a law of the jungle. It legitimizes the claims by certain armed groups and states that the international community only understands the logic of force. Therefore, we call for a response to what the civil and religious institutions have proposed, as mentioned earlier: the beginning of a system of economic sanctions and boycott to be applied against Israel. We repeat once again that this is not revenge but rather a serious action in order to reach a just and definitive peace that will put an end to Israeli occupation of Palestinian and other Arab territories and will guarantee security and peace for all.

8. Jewish and Muslim religious leaders

8. Finally, we address an appeal to the religious and spiritual leaders, Jewish and Muslim, with whom we share the same vision that every human being is created by God and has been given equal dignity. Hence the obligation for each of us to defend the oppressed and the dignity God has bestowed on them. Let us together try to rise up above the political positions that have failed so far and continue to lead us on the path of failure and suffering.

9. A call to our Palestinian people and to the Israelis

9.1 This is a call to see the face of God in each one of God's creatures and overcome the barriers of fear or race in order to establish a constructive dialogue and not remain within the cycle of never-ending manoeuvres that aim to keep the situation as it is. Our appeal is to reach a common vision, built on equality and sharing, not on superiority, negation of the other or aggression, using the pretext of fear and security. We say that love is possible and mutual trust is possible. Thus, peace is possible and definitive reconciliation also. Thus, justice and security will be attained for all.

9.2 Education is important. Educational programs must help us to get to know the other as he or she is rather than through the prism of conflict, hostility or religious fanaticism. The educational programs in place today are infected with this hostility. The time has come to begin a new education that allows one to see the face of God in the other and declares that we are capable of loving each other and building our future together in peace and security.

9.3 Trying to make the state a religious state, Jewish or Islamic, suffocates the state, confines it within narrow limits, and transforms it into a state that practices discrimination and exclusion, preferring one citizen over another. We appeal to both religious Jews and Muslims: let the state be a state for all its citizens, with a vision constructed on respect for religion but also equality, justice, liberty and respect for pluralism and not on domination by a religion or a numerical majority.

9.4 To the leaders of Palestine we say that current divisions weaken all of us and cause

more sufferings. Nothing can justify these divisions. For the good of the people, which must outweigh that of the political parties, an end must be put to division. We appeal to the international community to lend its support towards this union and to respect the will of the Palestinian people as expressed freely.

9.5 Jerusalem is the foundation of our vision and our entire life. She is the city to which God gave a particular importance in the history of humanity. She is the city towards which all people are in movement – and where they will meet in friendship and love in the presence of the One Unique God, according to the vision of the prophet Isaiah: *"In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it (…) He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more"* (Is. 2: 2-5). Today, the city is inhabited by two peoples of three religions; and it is on this prophetic vision and on the international resolutions concerning the totality of Jerusalem that any political solution must be based. This is the first issue that should be negotiated because the recognition of Jerusalem's sanctity and its message will be a source of inspiration towards finding a solution to the entire problem, which is largely a problem of mutual trust and ability to set in place a new land in this land of God.

10. Hope and faith in God

10. In the absence of all hope, we cry out our cry of hope. We believe in God, good and just. We believe that God's goodness will finally triumph over the evil of hate and of death that still persist in our land. We will see here "a new land" and "a new human being", capable of rising up in the spirit to love each one of his or her brothers and sisters.

This document is the Christian Palestinians'word to the world about what is happening in Palestine. It is written at this time when we wanted to see the Glory of the grace of God in this land and in the sufferings of its people. In this spirit the document requests the international community to stand by the Palestinian people who have faced oppression, displacement, suffering and clear apartheid for more than six decades. The suffering continues while the international community silently looks on at the occupying State, Israel. Our word is a cry of hope, with love, prayer and faith in God. We address it first of all to ourselves and then to all the churches and Christians in the world, asking them to stand against injustice and apartheid, urging them to work for a just peace in our region, calling on them to revisit theologies that justify crimes perpetrated against our people and the dispossession of the land. In this historic document, we Palestinian Christians declare that the military occupation of our land is a sin against God and humanity, and that any theology that legitimizes the occupation is far from Christian teachings because true Christian theology is a theology of love and solidarity with the oppressed, a call to justice and equality among peoples. This document did not come about spontaneously, and it is not the result of a coincidence. It is not a theoretical theological study or a policy paper, but is rather a document of faith and work. Its importance stems from thesincere expression of the concerns of the people and their view of this moment in history we are living through. It seeks to be prophetic in addressing things as they are without equivocation and with boldness, in addition it puts forward ending the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land and all forms of discrimination as the solution that will lead to a just and lasting peace with the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Al-Quds as its capital. The document also demands that all peoples, political leaders and decision-makers put pressure on Israel and take legal measures in order to oblige its government to put an end to its oppression and disregard for the

international law. The document also holds a clear position that non-violent resistance to this injustice is a right and duty for all Palestinians including Christians. The initiators of this document have been working on it for more than a year, in prayer and discussion, guided by their faith in God and their love for their people,
accepting advice from many friends: Palestinians, Arabs and those from the wider international community. We are grateful to our friends for their solidarity with us. As Palestinian Christians we hope that this document will provide the turning point to focus the efforts of all peaceloving peoples in the world, especially our Christian sisters and brothers. We hope also that it will be welcomed positively and will receive strong support, as was the South Africa Kairos document launched in 1985, which, at that time proved to be a tool in the struggle against oppression and occupation. We believe that liberation from occupationis in the interest of all peoples in the region because the problem is not just a political one, but one in which human beings are destroyed. We pray God to inspire us all, particularly our leaders and policy-makers, to find the way of justice and equality, and to realize that it is the only way that leads to the genuine peace we are seeking.

With thanks,
• His Beatitude Patriarch Michel Sabbah
• His Grace Bishop Dr. Munib Younan
• His Eminence Archbishop Atallah Hanna
• Rev. Dr. Jamal Khader
• Rev. Dr. Rafiq Khoury
• Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb
• Rev. Dr. Naim Ateek
• Rev. Dr. Yohana Katanacho
• Rev. Fadi Diab
• Dr. Jiries Khoury
• Ms. Cedar Duaybis
• Ms. Nora Kort
• Ms. Lucy Thaljieh
• Mr. Nidal Abu El Zuluf
• Mr. Yusef Daher
• Mr. Rifat Kassis – Coordinator

Note: A list of Palestinian Christian institutions and personalities that have signed the Kairos Palestine document and copies of the document in other languages are available at www.kairospalestine.ps

We hear the cry of our children

We, the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem, hear the cry of hope that our children have launched in these difficult times that we still experience in this Holy Land. We support them and stand by them in their faith, their hope, their love and their vision for the future. We also support the call to all our faithful as well as to the Israeli and Palestinian Leaders, to the International Community and to the World Churches, in order to accelerate the achievement of justice, peace and reconciliation in this Holy Land. We ask God to bless all our children by giving them more power in order to contribute effectively in establishing and developing their community, while making it a community in love, trust, justice and peace.

• His Beatitude Theophilos III, Greek Orthodox

- His Beatitude Patriarch Fouad Twal, Latin Church
- His Beatitude Patriarch Torkom Manougian, Armenian Orthodox
- Very Revd Father Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Custody of the Holy Land
- H.E. Archbishop Dr Anba Abraham, Coptic
- H.E. Archbishop Mar Swerios Malki Murad, Syrian Orthodox
- H.E. Archbishop Paul Nabil Sayah, Maronite
- H.E. Archbishop Abba Mathaious, Ethiopian
- H.E. Archbishop Joseph-Jules Zerey, Greek Catholic
- Bishop Gregor Peter Malki, Syrian Catholic
- Bishop Munib A. Younan, Lutheran
- Bishop Suheil Dawani, Anglican
- Bishop Raphael Minassian, Armenian Catholic

December 15, 2009

Item 26

Resolution on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Latin Americans of Japanese Descent Act

(Submitted by Church and Society Commission, First United Methodist Church, Sunnyvale, California, as voted (email, postal mail and telephone communication) on March 20, 2010, by a vote of 3 affirmative, 0 negative, no abstentions; total commission membership is 3. Contact person, Ballard W. George.) Fiscal impact: (cost estimate pending Congressional Budgeting office review).

Background: Amos 5, 24: But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

The United States interned over 110,000 people of Japanese descent during WWII and approximately 2,300 of these people were kidnapped from Latin America by the U.S. military with the help of Latin American government officials. Over 800 of Japanese Latin Americans were used in two prisoner exchanges with Japan. The U.S. government issued an apology and monetary reparations for its wartime violation against U.S. citizens and permanent residents of Japanese ancestry through the Civil Liberties Act of 1988. This act, however, did not bring relief for Japanese Latin Americans who were abducted and unlawfully interned in the U. S. Since the war, while many Japanese Latin Americans have passed away, almost 800 have sought redress. Many Japanese Latin Americans who remained in the United States were eventually able to secure permanent residency status and have become citizens of the United States. (Source: based on handout at Day of Remembrance event, San Jose, California, February 14, 2010)

Resolved: that letters be sent from the ~~Annual Conference~~ to the United States Senators from California and Nevada (Senators Barbara Boxer, Dianne Feinstein, Harry Reid and John Ensign, at Senate Office Building, Washington, D. C 20510), urging co-sponsorship of a bill establishing a commission with the following duties:

(1) Investigate and determine facts and circumstances surrounding the United States' relocation, internment and deportation of Latin Americans of Japanese descent, and the impacts of those actions by the United States.

(2) Recommend appropriate remedies, if any, based on preliminary findings by the original commission and new discoveries.

ITEM 27

RESOLUTION REGARDING PEACE WITH JUSTICE ACTIONS AND SUNDAY OBSERVANCE

(*submitted by the Conference Board of Church and Society as voted upon on March 6, 2010 by a vote of 9 aye, 0 opposed, 0 abstain; Board attendance at vote 9;*

Contact: Alan Jones.) Fiscal Impact: None.

Background:

1. Programming Peace and Justice Ministries into the life of discipleship

Our founder, John Wesley, instructed us that "there is no holiness but social holiness." Christian discipleship necessarily involves a commitment to the needs of the poor. The Conference Board of Church and Society strongly urges each congregation to designate a particular focus each year designed to build social justice. One option might be to choose one of the General Board of Church and Society's "Legislative Priorities" as a focus for action. For 2010, these are the following:

a. Health care reform
b. Addictions
c. Immigration reform
d. Ending child hunger
e. Global climate change issues
f. Global poverty
g. International family planning and AIDS prevention.

2. Peace with Justice Sunday Special Offering

Our Book of Discipline instructs us:

> *Six church-wide special Sundays with offerings shall be celebrated in each United Methodist Church*. (2008 Book of Discipline ¶ 263)

One of these special offerings is **Peace with Justice Sunday**. Congregations are encouraged to observe Peace with Justice Sunday on the Sunday after Pentecost:

> *Pentecost celebrates the outpouring of the Holy Spirit calling for God's shalom. Peace with Justice witnesses to God's demand for a faithful, just, disarmed and secure world.* (2008 Book of Discipline ¶ 263.5)

Half of the amount raised in this offering is retained within the Annual Conference, and is used to sponsor creative projects designed by local churches to promote peace and justice. The other half is used for similar projects nationally and around the world. These funds are typically "seed money" for local groups reaching out to build justice and peace in their local community.

Less than 40% of the congregations within this Annual Conference have responded to this call and instruction from the General Conference. This offering raised a little over 3 cents per member in the Conference in recent years.

RESOLUTION:

BE IT RESOLVED that every congregation identify at least one social justice concern as their particular focus for the calendar year 2011, and design a program which urges each of their members to identify their specific role in building social justice, as part of their personal life of discipleship.

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that every congregation within the Annual Conference be strongly urged to observe and celebrate ***Peace with Justice Sunday*** in 2011, including the receipt of the required Special Offering.

ITEM 28

RESOLUTION ON PUBLIC FINANCING OF ELECTION CAMPAIGNS

(submitted by the Conference Board of Church & Society as voted upon on March 6, 2010 by a vote of 9 aye, 0 opposed, 0 abstain; Board attendance at vote 9; Contact: Margo Tenold and Alan Jones.) Fiscal Impact: Negligible.

Background:

As people of faith, we believe that each person is made in the image of God. Each person is valued and should be heard. As citizens of the United States of America, we value a democratic system which gives each citizen one vote. The rule has been one person, one vote. Recently, campaign expenses have ballooned to such large amounts that only the rich have been able to run for office. In states such as Arizona, public financing of elections has enabled people who are not wealthy to run for office. The result has been:

- better representation of the views of the people in the legislative body, and
- obviation of legislators' need to spend two-thirds of their time raising money for re-election, as most currently do.

In recent months, the Supreme Court in its ruling *Citizens United v. Federal Elections Commission* (2010) 558 U.S. ____ (U.S. 08-205) has made it possible for corporations to pour unlimited funds into campaign attack ads that will favor the candidate they believe will vote for their interest. This violates the precedent set in *Baker v. Carr* (1962) 369 U.S. 186 where the rule of one person, one vote was upheld by the Supreme Court. We believe corporations are not the same as individuals. In addition, no individual can compete financially with the funding that corporations can pump into election campaigns. This Supreme Court ruling has made it easy for corporations (and wealthy individuals) to simply buy a seat in congress, and worse, a seat on any court that elects its judges. This undermines democracy and the God-given value of each person. We believe that in this single action the Supreme Court has effectively legalized corruption.

RESOLUTION:

BE IT RESOLVED that the Secretary on behalf of the California-Nevada Annual Conference send letters to all federal and state legislators strongly urging a federal constitutional amendment with three components:

1. that corporations should no longer treated as “individuals” for representational purposes,
2. that a system of public financing for federal elections shall be created which sets a limit on amounts to be spent on each election, and
3. that time limits shall be set for the duration of election campaigns.

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that each United Methodist church will encourage its members to write their elected representatives asking for this constitutional amendment, citing the tenet of faith that each person is of value and should have an equal voice in elections.

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that this resolution be forwarded in the name of the California-Nevada Annual Conference to General Conference 2012.

Item 29

RESOLUTION SUPPORTING SHARED FACILITIES THROUGH CULTURAL COMPETENCY TRAINING

Submitted by Commission on Religion and Race
Number present: 13 For: 13 Against: 0
March 12, 2010 Dr. Jeffrey Kuan, contact
Fiscal Impact $3,000

In the California-Nevada Annual Conference a significant number of United Methodist church congregations of different ethnic backgrounds and/or traditions are worshipping in the same church facility. Shared facility situations were raised as a major concern during the conference audit by the General Commission on Religion and Race and further examined by our conference Commission on Religion and Race.

Competent cross-cultural communication is necessary for effective cooperation and ministry of these congregations in shared facilities. Clergy and lay leadership of each congregation are central to such cross-cultural communication and effective working relations. The Annual Conference is responsible to provide training for congregations in shared facilities.

Therefore be it resolved that the Annual Conference shall provide joint cultural competency training for the clergy and local church lay leadership in shared facilities,

and that the California-Nevada Annual Conference shall develop and make available such training beginning in 2011 drawing upon the following resources of the Annual Conference: the CCORR, the Board of Ordained Ministry, the Board of Laity, and the Board of Missions Cross-cultural leadership team.

Be it further resolved that clergy and congregations currently in shared facility appointments shall participate in cultural competency training prior to annual conference 2012 and that for any new shared facility arrangements such training shall be accomplished prior to final approval by the District Superintendent.

Item 30_

Support Self-Determination and Independence to the People of East Turkistan

Submitted by Doug Sibley (member, Martinez UMC, Martinez, CA)
Contact: Doug Sibley
Financial Impact: Unknown at this time.

Background:

East Turkistan is also known as East Turkestan or Uyghuristan with the primary ethnic group being Uyghurs (or Uighurs). Today East Turkistan is controlled the Peoples Republic of China where it is known as the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Uyghurs (Turkic-speaking Muslims) became known to most Westerners when 26 Uyghur men were captured by bounty hunters in Pakistan and Afghanistan shortly after September 11, 2001, turned over to U.S. government forces and sent to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Having been cleared of all terrorist charges, they refused to be transported back to China where they fear imprisonment as well as execution, torture or other inhumane treatment. In 2006, five Uyghur men from Guantanamo were accepted by Albania, where four have remained. The fifth traveled to Sweden in 2007 where his sister lives, and was later granted asylum there. Four Uyghur detainees were relocated to Bermuda in June 2009. Six others were eventually accepted by Palau in the western Pacific in 2009, but have since been trying to immigrate to Australia which has a sizeable Uyghur population. In February 2010, the Swiss government accepted the release of two Uyghur brothers to Switzerland. Despite being cleared for release and officially declared no threat to the U.S., five of the nine remaining Uyghurs held at Guantánamo Bay had their bid for freedom in the U.S. mainland blocked by the State Department on March 2, 2010.

For a detailed summary/discussion of the Uyghur people and East Turkistan, please see the Wikipedia entry http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uyghur_people. Located in central Asia, the land and people have experienced considerable turmoil and destruction over the centuries. Early historical records start in the third century BC. The historic Silk Road passes through the territory.

In the United States, the Uyghur American Association http://www.uyghuramerican.org/ (UAA) has formed the Uyghur Human Rights Project http://www.uhrp.org/ to keep people informed of what is happening to Uyghurs around the world, particularly in their homeland. Amnesty International Group 30 http://www.aigroup30.org/index.php , a San Francisco branch of Amnesty International, has been advocating for the release of UAA President Ms. Rebiya

Kadeer's children who are being held by Chinese authorities in East Turkistan because of her activism in the US, where she currently resides.

Today the Chinese government is importing thousands of Han Chinese people to settle in East Turkistan (Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region) while systematically destroying heritage and historic sites often over 1,000 years old in order to weaken Uyghur resistance to its rule. An East Turkestan Republic government-in-exile was proclaimed on September 24, 2004 in Washington, DC. Its offices are in Oakton, VA.

The 2009-2012 Social Principles of The United Methodist Church says, in part:

> **¶ 162. III. The Social Community, *B) Rights of Religious Minorities*** . . . . We urge policies and practices that ensure the right of every religious group to exercise its faith free from legal, political, or economic restrictions. We condemn all overt and covert forms of religious intolerance, being especially sensitive to their expression in media stereotyping. We assert the right of all religions and their adherents to freedom from legal, economic, and social discrimination…
>
> **¶ 164. V. The Political Community, *A) Basic Freedoms and Human Rights*—**We hold governments responsible for the protection of the rights of the people to free and fair elections and to the freedoms of speech, religion, assembly, communications media, and petition for redress of grievances without fear of reprisal; to the right to privacy; and to the guarantee of the rights to adequate food, clothing, shelter, education, and health care. The form and the leaders of all governments should be determined by exercise of the right to vote guaranteed to all adult citizens. We also strongly reject domestic surveillance and intimidation of political opponents by governments in power and all other misuses of elective or appointive offices. The use of detention and imprisonment for the harassment and elimination of political opponents or other dissidents violates fundamental human rights. Furthermore, the mistreatment or torture, and other cruel, inhumane, and degrading treatment or punishment of persons by governments for any purpose violates Christian teaching and must be condemned and/or opposed by Christians and churches wherever and whenever it occurs…
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> **¶ 165. VI. The World Community, *A) Nations and Cultures*—**As individuals are affirmed by God in their diversity, so are nations and cultures. We recognize that no nation or culture is absolutely just and right in its treatment of its own people, nor is any nation totally without regard for the welfare of its citizens. The Church must regard nations as accountable for unjust treatment of their citizens and others living within their borders. While recognizing valid differences in culture and political philosophy, we stand for justice and peace in every nation.

Resolution:

Be it resolved that the California-Nevada Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church support self-determination and ~~independence~~ of the people and land of East Turkistan (Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, People's Republic of China).

Be it further resolved that the Secretary of the California-Nevada Annual Conference write letters to each U.S. Senator and Representative of California and Nevada who represent parts of our Annual Conference to support (1) **Senate Resolution 155** introduced by Senator Sherrod Brown of Ohio, May 21, 2009 which expresses "the sense of the Senate that the Government of the People's Republic of China should immediately cease engaging in acts of cultural, linguistic, and religious suppression directed against the Uyghur people," (2) **House Resolution 953** introduced by Representative James P. McGovern of Massachusetts which expresses "the sense of the House of Representatives that the Government of the People's Republic of China has violated internationally recognized human rights and legal due process standards by carrying out executions after trials marred by procedural abuses and by carrying out arbitrary detentions targeting Uyghurs and other individuals in Xinjiang in the aftermath of a suppressed demonstration and ensuing mob violence on July 5 to 7, 2009," and (3) support the release of cleared Uyghur detainees into the United States, particularly here in the San Francisco Bay Area where an active Uyghur community already exists. Individual members of the California-Nevada Conference of The United Methodist Church are urged to write to their US Senators and US Representative requesting they support or co-sponsor these two bills, as well as the release of Uyghur detainees to the U.S. including the Bay Area;

Be it further resolved that the Secretary of the California-Nevada Annual Conference write to U.S. Secretary of State and President Barack Obama supporting the entry into the United States as seekers of asylum any or all Uyghur Guantanamo detainees who have already been cleared of all charges of being anti-U.S. terrorists and who fear for their lives if returned to the People's Republic of China. This includes any detainee who has already been relocated from Guantanamo Bay, Cuba to a third country such as Albania, Sweden, Palau or Switzerland;

Be it further resolved that The United Methodist Church support the United Nations' efforts to protect the human rights of all Uyghurs and other peoples of East Turkistan (Xinjiang) (including political prisoners) wherever they live and to preserve the distinct religious, cultural, and linguistic heritage of the people of East Turkistan;

Be it further resolved that the general boards and agencies of The United Methodist Church continue to monitor this situation and provide opportunities for United Methodist church

members to advocate for justice for the people of East Turkistan (Xinjiang), including political prisoners; and

And be it further resolved that the Secretary of the California-Nevada Annual Conference forward this resolution to the Council of Bishops **and** to the 2012 General Conference for their support and adoption of this or a similar resolution.