

2016 Churchwide Assembly
**Background for Memorials Regarding “Peace
Not Walls” Campaign¹**

**Category C1:
Peace with Justice in the Holy Land**

Since the adoption of the “Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine” by the Church Council and its affirmation at the 2005 Churchwide Assembly, the “Peace not Walls: Stand for Justice in the Holy Land” campaign has been implementing the strategy’s three key emphases: accompaniment, awareness-raising and advocacy. The strategy states that the ELCA “is committed to building a movement that will strengthen the resolve of political leaders to find a peaceful and just solution in the Holy Land.” Furthermore, the strategy “is built on the conviction that the ELCA is called to intensify and sharpen its efforts, giving greater visibility to its commitments both among its members and in the public sphere.”

Central to the work of accompaniment is the goal for continuation of the witness of indigenous Christian churches in Jerusalem and the Holy Land (i.e., continued vitality of the ministries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land [ELCJHL] and The Lutheran World Federation [LWF]–Jerusalem and Jordan programs, including Augusta Victoria Hospital, recognition of the ELCJHL as a church by the Government of Israel, reduction in the emigration of Palestinian Christians that is a result of economic, social and political impact of the Israeli occupation, and removal of the separation barrier/wall which threatens the viability of the ELCJHL schools in the Bethlehem area and the LWF ministries that serve Palestinians). Specifically, since 1989 the ELCA has been sharing resources and personnel with the ELCJHL including financial resources in support of the church and its schools, and the provision of an English-speaking pastor at Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, Jerusalem, a communication coordinator working with the ELCJHL, a Holy Land Trips Liaison, and Young Adults in Global Mission country coordinators and program participants in Jerusalem and the West Bank.

In the area of awareness-raising, Peace Not Walls (PNW) continues to keep ELCA members informed about the situation through updates to the ELCA web pages, providing printed resources, responding to requests for information, blog postings, providing support to a network of PNW leaders, etc. Of particular focus in recent years have been efforts with synods to increase the number of ELCA church leaders visiting the ELCJHL, the LWF and related organizations — to have a firsthand experience of visiting the “living stones” in Palestine, and a project to train ELCA young adults to lead Holy Land trips for other young adults focused on accompaniment, awareness-raising and advocacy and in a second round of the project to equip ELCA young adults of color to lead Holy Land trips that specifically focus on the intersection of race, culture and class in the United States,

¹ From 2016 Pre-Assembly Report: Report of the Memorials Committee, 99-100.



Israel and Palestine. Also, a number of members of the Association for Lutherans of Arab and Middle East Heritage (ALAMEH) participate in the work of the campaign.

Advocacy continues to center on the intersection between U.S. foreign assistance and the political and humanitarian outcomes outlined in the strategy such as an ultimate goal of “Israelis and Palestinians co-existing in justice and peace, as citizens of viable and secure Israeli and Palestinian states.” In the meantime, monthly action alerts, blog postings and advocacy visits with elected officials in Washington, D.C., have focused on the identified outcomes (i.e., an end to Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, an end to terrorism and violence against Palestinians and Israelis by individuals, groups and states, an end to further expansion of the separation wall on Palestinian territory and the related appropriation of natural resources [e.g., water, farmland], a cessation of all settlement activities and withdrawal from settlements on Palestinian territory to the 1967 boundaries, and a negotiated, final-status agreement, which includes a “shared Jerusalem” that can serve as a capital to both Palestine and Israel, with access by and full rights in the city for Jews, Christians, and Muslims).

With respect to eliminating military aid as a part of U.S. foreign assistance, in recent years the ELCA has joined with other ecumenical partners in calling for holding recipient countries of military aid, including Israel, accountable to U.S. laws that require it be used in conformity with international human rights standards. This is consonant with the ELCA’s commitment to Israel’s right to exist within secure borders, the establishment of a viable Palestinian state and an end to the Israeli occupation (UNSCR 242 and 338). This is also consistent with a 1991 Churchwide Assembly action (CA91.6.33) that encouraged ELCA members to write to their political leaders asking them “to relate U.S. foreign assistance to the willingness of those nations to negotiate with one another in good faith and to adhere to international law and human rights conventions.”

In a related action, the ELCA has been supporting efforts to have Palestinian children released from military detention.

There are two provisions in existing U.S. law, also known as the Leahy law because the principal sponsor was U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy of Vermont, that specify internationally recognized human rights standards. These provisions state: “No assistance shall be furnished under this Act or the Arms Export Control Act to any unit of the security forces of a foreign country if the Secretary of State has credible

information that such unit has committed a gross violation of human rights” (Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 as amended, 22 U.S. Code § 2378d), and “Of the amounts made available to the Department of Defense, none may be used for any training, equipment, or other assistance for a unit of a foreign security force if the Secretary of Defense has credible information that the unit has committed a gross violation of human rights” (Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 10 U.S. Code § 2249e)

2016 Churchwide Assembly
Action Regarding “Peace Not Walls” Campaign
ASSEMBLY ACTION CA16.05.13
YES-751; NO-162

To receive with gratitude the memorials of the Northwest Washington, Sierra Pacific, Southwest California, Rocky Mountain, Minneapolis Area, Southwestern Texas, Southeastern Iowa, South-Central Wisconsin, Southeast Michigan, Indiana/Kentucky, Metropolitan New York, Northeastern Pennsylvania, Upper Susquehanna and West Virginia-Western Maryland synods related to Israel and Palestine;

To reaffirm the commitment of this church to:

1. Continue its awareness-building, accompaniment, and advocacy on behalf of a peaceful resolution of the conflict between Israel and Palestine;
2. Take steps to assist the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) and other Christians in sustaining their endangered presence in the Holy Land;
3. Promote the economic empowerment of Palestinians, including investment in Palestinian projects and businesses;
4. Promote the protection of the human rights of Palestinians and Israelis and oppose all violence and actions which discriminate against or deny any people their basic freedom, dignity or human rights;
5. Embrace the principles of restorative justice as part of the ELCA’s advocacy and engagement for the just resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and actively seek ways to support Palestinians and Israelis engaging in restorative justice dialogue and other projects; and
6. Continue to pray for the ELCJHL and the work of The Lutheran World Federation Jerusalem program; To encourage this church’s members, congregations, synods, and agencies as well as the presiding bishop to call on the U.S. President, in coordination with the United Nations Security Council, to offer a new, comprehensive and time-bound agreement to the governments of Israel and Palestine, resulting in a negotiated final status agreement between Israel and Palestine leading to two viable and secure states with a shared Jerusalem;

To urge this church’s members, congregations, synods, agencies and presiding bishop to call on their U.S. Representatives, Senators and the Administration to take action requiring that, to continue receiving U.S. financial and

military aid, Israel must comply with internationally recognized human rights standards as specified in existing U.S. law, stop settlement building and the expansion of existing settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, end its occupation of Palestinian territory, and enable an independent Palestinian state; and

To encourage this church’s members, congregations, synods, and agencies to call on the U.S. President to recognize the State of Palestine and not prevent the application of the State of Palestine for full membership in the United Nations.