



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.



DEVELOPMENTS IN ELCA ENGAGEMENT WITH ISRAEL/PALESTINE

ELCA Actions Prior to "Peace Not Walls" Campaign

1989:

Churchwide Assembly affirms the ELCA's solidarity with the ELCJHL and encourages ELCA members to familiarize themselves with the history of the Middle East and the current issues and to be advocates for "responsible political action" (CA89.8.114).

Churchwide Assembly affirms the Church Council's adoption of the "Message on the Israeli/Palestinian Conflict" and encourages ELCA members to be advocates for "responsible political action" (CA89.8.114).

1991:

Churchwide Assembly encourages individuals and congregations "to reach out to people in the Muslim and Jewish communities in North America, in order to foster interreligious dialogue and mutual understanding so that we may build relationships" (CA91.6.33).

2001:

Churchwide Assembly affirms efforts to accompany Palestinians and Israelis in nonviolent efforts to end the occupation (CA01.02.09).

2003:

Churchwide Assembly encourages continuation of "interfaith activities in the United States to promote mutual understanding, cooperation, and respect" (CA03.02.07).

Churchwide Assembly reaffirms commitment to accompany the ELCJHL and to offer humanitarian relief and development assistance (CA03.02.07).

2005

April: A "**Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine**" was adopted by the ELCA Church Council.

[SEE STRATEGY DOCUMENT](#)

2005 Churchwide Assembly

Background for Memorials concerning "Peace Not Walls" Campaign¹

At its April 2005 meeting, the ELCA Church Council adopted a Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine. This strategy builds upon the long history of involvement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and its predecessor bodies in the Holy Land. It also acknowledges that, at this time, there appears to be a window of opportunity in which a lasting peace may be crafted. This lends urgency to the ELCA work for peace with justice in the Holy Land. It also recognizes that the ELCA's companion church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), has requested the advocacy and assistance of the ELCA and other churches of the Lutheran World Federation in dealing with the hardships to Palestinian communities caused by the continuing Israeli occupation and its construction of the separation wall on Palestinian land. The ELCJHL also has expressed its deep concern that these actions pose a serious threat to its future and the future of the "living church" in the Holy Land.

The memorials of the Southeast Michigan, Metropolitan New York, and Oregon Synods call on the 2005 Churchwide Assembly to affirm actions described in the Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine. This strategy was developed by the Division for Church in Society and the Division for Global Mission, with participation from other units, synods, and a wide variety of academics, experts in interfaith dialogue, advocates, and participants in grassroots networks. Background information is found in the *2005 Pre-Assembly Report*, Section IV, pages 75–78, and the Churchwide Strategy is found in Section V, pages 48–58. A summary of actions by the ELCA and its predecessor bodies is included in the strategy.

This strategy affirms the ELCA's commitment to accompany its companion church in the Holy Land in mission and calls for the development of a churchwide campaign, "Peace Not Walls," which encourages members, congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization to join in this effort. It calls for, among other things, "an end to terrorism and violence by individuals, organizations, and states" and states that the ELCA will express this commitment in its advocacy.

According to the strategy, one element of this advocacy will be to explore economic initiatives, including "promoting positive economic development in the region to help those most in need," "insisting that U.S. tax dollars for foreign aid be distributed to both Palestinians and Israelis with equity and on condition that aid be used for economic growth and humanitarian needs," "making consumer decisions that favor support to those in greatest need," and "managing collective or personal investments with concern for their impact on the lives of all Holy Land peoples who suffer from ongoing conflict."

The promotion of economic initiatives can be manifested in many forms. For example, shareholder actions, including dialogue with corporate management, filing of shareholder resolutions, outreach to other shareholders and investment advisors, and voting of proxies, can be used to change corporate policies or practices. Other economic initiatives include boycotts of products and services to coerce or to express protest, divestment, social investing, and development of social screens. While all of

¹ From 2005 Churchwide Assembly Minutes, 446-447.

these tools may be available to this church, certain actions such as divestment are not available to the Board of Pensions. The Board of Pensions has always taken the position that divestment, *per se*, of pension accumulations is an illegal violation of its fiduciary duties under both federal and Minnesota law.

As an alternative to divestment, the ELCA Retirement Plan provides eight investment fund options that are social purpose funds. These funds apply social screens in accordance with the values of this church and within the fiduciary responsibility the Board of Pensions bears for its plan members. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has no policy on the subject of divestment. While some other denominations have undertaken certain economic initiatives, it is the policy of the ELCA that this church does not comment on actions or matters that are internal to other church bodies.

The 2005 Churchwide Assembly will be considering a recommendation related to the Churchwide Strategy and the "Peace Not Walls" campaign (*2005 Pre-Assembly Report*, Section IV, pages 75-77, and Section V, pages 47-60), which deals with many of the concerns of the synods. However, the Metropolitan New York and Oregon Synods call on the ELCA Churchwide Assembly to take a separate action relating to the separation wall.

At its April 2004 and April 2005 meetings, the ELCA Church Council took action on this issue (CC05.04.19), upon recommendation of the Division for Global Mission and the Division for Church in Society:

To acknowledge the urgent call of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land for action regarding the continuing construction of the separation wall in Palestine;

To encourage members, congregations, and synods to become aware of the effects of the separation wall on the lives of Palestinians, including:

- a. the threat to future hopes for peace; and
- b. the threat to the ministries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land and other churches;

To call for the immediate cessation of construction of the Israeli separation wall and the removal of all existing portions of this wall on Palestinian land;

To request that the Division for Church in Society intensify its advocacy relating to this critical situation, in accord with the Churchwide strategy for ELCA Engagement in Israel and Palestine;

To request that members of this church and synods meeting in assembly respond to the request of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's companion church in the Holy Land for bold advocacy that calls for construction of the separation wall to cease; and

To direct appropriate churchwide staff to provide information related to this issue for use by members, congregations, and synods.

At the time they conveyed this action to the council, the Division for Global

Mission and the Division for Church in Society noted that ELCA Churchwide Assembly action on the separation wall might be desirable, should the Israeli government continue its construction of the wall. They suggested that, should this be the case, a resolution be crafted for consideration by the Churchwide Assembly, which would be conveyed to the assembly by the ELCA Church Council at its pre-assembly meeting. This approach will enable the Churchwide Assembly to act on the most current information in a rapidly changing situation.

2005 Churchwide Assembly
Action Regarding "Peace Not Walls" Campaign²

Note: On June 23 by a vote of 668 to 269 the ELCA Churchwide assembly voted to institute the campaign "Peace Not Walls: Stand for Justice in the Holy Land." This is the text of the assembly action that they passed.

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and its predecessor bodies have:

- a. accompanied the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land in its life and ministry in Jerusalem and the occupied Palestinian Territories, and
- b. provided humanitarian and refugee assistance to Palestinians for over fifty years, through the Lutheran World Federation's Augusta Victoria Hospital and other ministries; and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and its predecessor bodies have for many years worked for peace between Israelis and Palestinians, advocating for political solutions that address the rights to security and peace with justice for both Palestinians and Israelis; and

WHEREAS, the 1989 Churchwide Assembly affirmed the Message on "The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," which acknowledged that

- a. Because of a history of discrimination and genocide and the dangers feared today, the desire for national security is the major Israeli political goal.
- b. Because of a history of occupation and experience as a refugee people, Palestinian self-determination incorporated within an independent Palestinian state is the major Palestinian political goal" and that these two goals needed to be recognized as legitimate if peace is to be achieved; and

WHEREAS, Bishop Munib A. Younan of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land has stated: "It is our conviction that the security of Israel is dependent on freedom and justice for Palestinians, and that freedom and justice for Palestinians is dependent on security for Israel. This symbiotic relationship remains the key for any just solution in the area";

WHEREAS, acting in accord with the 1995 social statement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, "For Peace in God's World," and working in partnership with other Lutherans, ecumenical, interfaith, and secular partners, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is committed to building a movement that will strengthen the resolve of political leaders—including those in the U.S.—to find a peaceful and just solution in the Holy Land; and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) and the Lutheran World Federation have drawn to the attention of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America not only the extreme hardship brought to Palestinian communities by the continuing Israeli occupation and construction of the separation wall or barrier on Palestinian land, but also the imminent threat they pose to the future of the ELCJHL and

² From 2005 Churchwide Assembly Minutes, 370-372.

other Christian churches in the Holy Land; and

WHEREAS, the emerging fragile prospects for a lasting peace between Israel and Palestine require both Israelis and Palestinians to 1) avoid taking any actions that would undermine the peace (e.g., attacks on civilians, confiscation of land) and 2) actively engage in actions that strengthen the will for peace; and

WHEREAS, the 2003 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America reaffirmed “the ELCA’s commitment to accompany the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and Palestine and its ecumenical and inter-faith partners, to carry out public policy and human rights advocacy on their behalf, and to offer humanitarian relief and development assistance” and expressed the “hope that the Quartet’s [U.S., Russian Federation, European Union, and United Nations] ‘Road Map’ will lead to an end to the occupation, terrorist attacks, and all other forms of violent conflict, as well as to both a viable, contiguous, independent Palestinian state and a secure Israel”; and

WHEREAS, in carrying out this mandate, the Church Council in April 2004 joined the Lutheran World Federation, the World Council of Churches, and others seeking peace in the region in calling for an end to the construction of the Israeli separation wall or barrier being built on Palestinian land, which may undermine efforts toward a credible two-state solution; and

WHEREAS, the Church Council in April 2005 approved the Churchwide Strategy for ELCA Engagement in Israel and Palestine; and

WHEREAS, this strategy responds to the call of ELCA companions in the Holy Land or a churchwide campaign for peace: “Peace Not Walls: Stand for Justice in the Holy Land”; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that, acting in accord with previous ELCA policy actions, members, congregations, synods, the churchwide organization, and church-related agencies and institutions are urged to participate in the churchwide campaign for peace: “Peace Not Walls: Stand for Justice in the Holy Land” by engaging in awareness-building, accompaniment, and advocacy activities, including:

1. praying for peace with justice between Israel and Palestine and for the continuing witness of the Christian Church—including the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land—in the region;
2. building relationships with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, the ministries of the Lutheran World Federation, and other ecumenical and inter-faith companions engaged in the pursuit of peace in the Holy Land;
3. continuing to build bridges to other Christian brothers and sisters throughout the Middle East, including Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, and Egypt, and advocating for human rights when those rights are threatened;
4. learning about the situation in the Holy Land, sharing information, and building networks;
5. intensifying advocacy for a just peace in the region, building upon Evangelical

Lutheran Church in America and predecessor body policies, and engaging with the public media in this effort;

6. stewarding financial resources—both U.S. tax dollars and private funds—in ways that support the quest for a just peace in the Holy Land; and
7. giving generously to help ensure the continuation of the schools and other ministries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land and the humanitarian work of the Lutheran World Federation through Augusta Victoria Hospital and other ministries; and be it further

RESOLVED, that individual congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are encouraged to become part of a chain of action to link the 2005 Churchwide Assembly with the 2006 synodical assemblies through congregational use of communion ware made in Bethlehem, thereby expressing in worship, prayer, giving, and advocacy this church's solidarity with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land.

2007 Churchwide Assembly

Background for Memorials concerning the "Peace Not Walls" Campaign³

A "Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine" was adopted by the ELCA Church Council in April 2005. The ninth ELCA Churchwide Assembly, meeting subsequently in August 2005, urged "members, congregations, synods, the churchwide organization, and church-related agencies and institutions...to participate in the churchwide campaign for peace—Peace Not Walls: Stand for Justice in the Holy Land—by engaging in awareness-building, accompaniment, and advocacy activities..."

To follow-up on the actions assigned the churchwide organization, an inter-unit working group was established to undertake implementation of these tasks. A report has been prepared for the tenth Churchwide Assembly about these efforts in the three areas of focus (Section V).

With reference to corporate investments in Israel and Palestine, the ELCA Advisory Committee on Corporate Social Responsibility has been reviewing the involvement of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program, a program of the Church in Society unit, in order to address this specific issue. The committee has recommended that the CSR program expand current dialogues with corporations around human rights issues to include the region where appropriate. In some instances, these corporations are operational in Israel, the occupied Palestinian territories, or both. In a number of these cases, attention is called to the impact of their business activities on the occupation and the degree to which they may or may not contribute to acts of violence. As the strategy continues to be implemented, further work with corporations is expected.

The ELCA churchwide strategy furthermore clearly addresses and advocates for the necessity of financial support for the ministries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). The strategy also notes the importance of visits to the region by members of the ELCA and the resulting development and strengthening of relationships with the ELCJHL, the LWF, other partners, and other groups and individuals in Palestine and Israel who share a commitment to peace and a just resolution of the conflict.

One aspect of the advocacy portion of the strategy titled, "Stewarding Economic Resources," calls on various expressions of the ELCA to be involved in "promoting positive economic development in the region to help those most in need (e.g., support for Palestinian businesses, including the establishment of micro-loans)." Consequently, the CSR program is in conversation with a variety of business people and has researched possible economic development activities that the ELCA may be able to support. It also has had initial discussions with the leadership of the ELCJHL about these possibilities and has plans for further conversations about specific options that could be pursued. Should these efforts prove fruitful and consonant with the views of the ELCJHL, concrete steps would be taken to support such economic development as well as encourage ELCA members to consider doing likewise.

In terms of addressing the affects of Christian Zionism on the peace process in the Middle East, the ELCA churchwide strategy calls for "increased engagement with conservative Christians and a clearer and more forceful expression of Lutheran theology in the public debate..." The Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations section of the Office of the Presiding Bishop (ER) administers the participation of this church in Christian Churches Together

³ From 2007 Churchwide Assembly Minutes, 137-138

(CCT), Religions for Peace, U.S.A., and other conciliar and non-conciliar bodies where discourse with conservative Christians and inter-religious partners encourages clear and substantial articulation of Lutheran theology that contributes to public debate. Likewise, the ELCA participates on the Interfaith Commission of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. (NCCC), where topics of religious extremism are addressed with ecumenical partners. For instance, the ELCA is present on an NCCC ecumenical task force convened for the purpose of addressing Christian Zionism. Members of the NCCC interfaith commission and subsequent task force look to develop and otherwise contribute to congregational and educational resources on the subject. Finally, in recent years ecumenical and inter-religious resources and toolkits for dialogue that have been developed for congregational use address religious extremism and the subsequent dangers of extremism for both North America and the peace process in Israel-Palestine.

The ELCA churchwide organization has continued its efforts to support efforts by the international community, including the United States, to realize a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that leads to justice and peace in the Holy Land with the establishment of a viable and contiguous Palestinian state co-existing alongside a secure Israel. Meetings with United States officials by the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative (a group of more than 30 leaders of the three Abrahamic faiths and the advocacy work of Churches for Middle East Peace (a Washington, D.C.-based coalition of Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox churches that promotes a more constructive U.S. policy toward the Middle East) are some of the contexts in which advocacy is undertaken by the ELCA churchwide organization.

2007 Churchwide Assembly
Action Regarding "Peace Not Walls" Campaign⁴

Note: On June 30 by a vote of 697-245, the 10th ELCA Churchwide Assembly reaffirmed the 2005 Assembly's call of the Peace Not Walls campaign as well as adding some specifics about how to engage this in practice.

To receive the memorials from the Pacifica Synod, Metropolitan New York Synod, Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Synod, New England Synod, Southeast Michigan Synod, and Metropolitan Chicago Synod and to thank them for their support of efforts by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to promote peace with justice in the Holy Land;

To note the participation of the ELCA in ecumenical and inter-religious forums where religious extremism is addressed;

To acknowledge the Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine, including its call for "increased engagement with conservative Christians and a clearer and more forceful expression of Lutheran theology in the public debate . . ."; and

To call upon the ELCA, in all of its expressions, to recommit itself to the Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine through awareness-building, accompaniment, and advocacy activities, including pilgrimage visits, sustained financial support, and other forms of economic stewardship; and

To call upon the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to underscore the call for economic initiatives by this church and its members in the "Peace, Not Walls" campaign. Such initiatives, in consultation with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, could include:

- purchasing of products from Palestinian providers and
- exploration of the feasibility of refusing to buy products produced in Israeli settlements.

Also to be explored is the entire investment activity by this church. Examination of investments would exclude the option of divestiture.

⁴ From 2007 Churchwide Assembly Minutes, 335-336.

2009 Churchwide Assembly

Background for Memorials concerning "Peace Not Walls" Campaign⁵

A "Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine" was adopted by the ELCA Church Council in April 2005. The ninth ELCA Churchwide Assembly, meeting subsequently in August 2005, urged "members, congregations, synods, the churchwide organization, and church-related agencies and institutions...to participate in the churchwide campaign for peace—Peace Not Walls: Stand for Justice in the Holy Land—by engaging in awareness-building, accompaniment, and advocacy activities..." The tenth ELCA Churchwide Assembly in 2007:

4. [called] upon the ELCA, in all of its expressions, to recommit itself to the Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine through awareness-building, accompaniment, and advocacy activities, including pilgrimage visits, sustained financial support, and other forms of economic stewardship; and
5. [called] upon the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to underscore the call for economic initiatives by this church and its members in the "Peace, Not Walls" campaign. Such initiatives, in consultation with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, could include:
 - purchasing of products from Palestinian providers and
 - exploration of the feasibility of refusing to buy products produced in Israeli settlements. Also to be explored is the entire investment activity by this church. Examination of investments would exclude the option of divestiture.

The strategy is now in its fourth year of implementation through the Peace Not Walls (PNW) campaign. While there has been little overall political progress toward solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and thus much disappointment, the strategy has been the basis for realizing a number of notable accomplishments since the 2007 Churchwide Assembly, which can provide the basis for more activities in the coming months. Perhaps the most widely known event was the ELCA Conference of Bishops' academy held in the Holy Land in January 2009. Forty-five bishops from the ELCA and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada participated in a week-long visit that included worship experiences and meetings in Jordan (for a portion of the group), Jerusalem, Israel, and the West Bank. The bishops initially shared their experiences via a blog and then prepared a statement at the end of the visit. Many of them have prepared separate reports and have shared with their synods and local communities what they saw and heard. A number of bishops who were unable to travel in January are planning a visit in late November.

In the area of awareness-building, Peace Not Walls has distributed more than 5,000 map cards, which outline the loss of Palestinian lands since 1948; has established Web pages with a variety of resources, such as handouts, videos, presentations, worship materials, and statements; has planned for a presence at the 2009 Lutheran Youth Gathering and Lutheran Youth Organization convention; and supported the development of a feature article on Christian Zionism in *The Lutheran* magazine. The 2008 video, "Peace Not Walls: Making a Difference in the Holy Land," has been

⁵ From 2009 Pre-Assembly Report: Report of the Memorials Committee, 23-24.

distributed widely to synods and congregations.

In the area of accompaniment, regular visits have been made to the region to be with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) as well as to assist their leaders, members, and youth in visits to various locations and meetings in the United States. Six ELCA members have been selected for service with the ELCJHL as part of the Young Adults in Global Mission program. Three ELCA members have served with the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel and another is serving as its U.S. coordinator. To enhance our companions' economic well-being, the Peace Not Walls Web site facilitates the purchase of Palestinian products from Lutheran and other Christian ministries.

With respect to advocacy, the ELCA continues to be active in extensive ecumenical and interfaith work through organizations such as Churches for Middle East Peace, the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East (NILI), and a Christian-Jewish dialogue group coordinated by the National Council of Churches and the American Jewish Committee. Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson has become more widely recognized for his leadership on Middle East issues through his involvement in NILI, hosting a Christian-Muslim conversation with King Abdullah II of Jordan in April 2009, joining a meeting of Christian leaders with former President Jimmy Carter to encourage President Obama's efforts for a two-state solution, being appointed to the White House Task Force on inter-religious dialogue and cooperation, and being an organizer of an ecumenical letter to the president in June 2009 on the importance of Israeli-Palestinian peace following the President's address in Cairo, Egypt. At the synodical and local levels, a national database of ELCA members active in promoting Middle East peace is helping to raise awareness and is leading ecumenical and interreligious advocacy efforts.

The churchwide strategy calls for accompaniment of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), and ecumenical and other partners as well as accompaniment of "Palestinians and Israelis in nonviolent efforts to end the occupation." It calls for "peace with justice in Israel and Palestine" as well as "for a viable, contiguous, independent Palestinian state and a secure Israel." The strategy encourages solidarity with both Israelis and Palestinians who share the strategy's goals.

Throughout its history, the ELCA has expressed solidarity with various peoples, but never with a nation state or government; hence, in this strategy, it does not express solidarity with either the State of Israel or the Palestinian Authority. Throughout its history, the ELCA has not aligned itself with specific national political movements and has raised serious questions about the legitimacy of some, especially those which foment hatred, exclusivity, and ethnic cleansing. The ELCA has not commented on the value of any political self-expression but has committed itself to confronting religious extremism in all its forms, including exclusivist religious claims that are ethnic in scope.

The ELCA strategy stresses the importance of working with those who seek nonviolent means to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as well as with those who share the goals of peace with justice and a commitment to peace as outlined in the strategy. The strategy has undertaken a number of efforts to create greater awareness of the dire situation of the neighbor or "other" in the conflict. Furthermore, this church has encouraged those in conflict to seek peaceful means that respect the dignity of all people and the integrity of all parties. To these ends, dialogue between Lutherans

and Jews as well as Lutherans and Muslims are encouraged in order to engender awareness, mutual respect, and relationships of integrity. In addition, this church has addressed how Christian faith and love are central to relationships with the Jewish and Muslim communities.

As noted earlier, the strategy has both called for mutual understanding between Israelis and Palestinians and lauded efforts that seek to promote such understanding. Some examples of those efforts lifted up in various media include the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land (a collaborative effort of Jewish, Muslim, and Christian leaders in the area) and the Parents Circle—Families Forum, which brings together the bereaved relatives of both Israelis and Palestinians killed in the conflict to move toward reconciliation rather than hatred or revenge.

2009 Churchwide Assembly
Action Regarding "Peace Not Walls" Campaign⁶

Assembly Action: CA 09.06.36
Yes- 690
No-125

To receive the memorials of the Western Washington-Idaho, Southwestern Texas, Indiana-Kentucky, New England, Northeastern Pennsylvania, Lower Susquehanna, and Metropolitan Washington, D.DC, synods related to the ELC strategy "Peace Not Walls: Stand for Justice in the Holy Land";

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. Evaluate and refine its peace-making efforts to demonstrate as fully as possible the "balanced ... care for all parties" expressed in the Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine (2005; Sect. II.A), while continuing our unique relationship with and accompaniment of Palestinian Christians and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL);
3. Learn more about the experiences of both Israelis and Palestinians and their mutual fears, aspirations, and hopes;
4. Work to convey the concerns and perspectives of Palestinians and Israelis that dispel stereotypes and caricatures and promote better understanding;
5. Lift up the voices within both communities, especially those of victims of violence, that seek peace with justice through nonviolent responses to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict;
6. Continue to help alleviate the humanitarian needs of all of those affected by the conflict, especially in Gaza;
7. Support U.S. funding that promotes peace and cooperation for all parties to the conflict; and
8. Continue to pray for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land and for the Israeli and Palestinian peoples."

⁶ From 2009 Preliminary Minutes: Plenary Session Eleven, 9-10.

2011 Churchwide Assembly

Background for Memorials on Investment for Positive Change in Palestine

A Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine was adopted by the ELCA Church Council in April 2005. The strategy is now in its sixth year of implementation through the Peace Not Walls (PNW) campaign, which focuses on the three commitments of accompaniment, awareness-building, and advocacy. Information about the campaign has been included in the report of the Global Mission unit in Section III of the Pre-Assembly Report.

The ninth ELCA Churchwide Assembly, meeting in August 2005, urged “members, congregations, synods, the churchwide organization, and church-related agencies and institutions . . . to participate in the churchwide campaign for peace—Peace Not Walls: Stand for Justice in the Holy Land—by engaging in awareness-building, accompaniment, and advocacy activities.”

The tenth ELCA Churchwide Assembly in 2007 voted:

To call upon the ELCA, in all of its expressions, to recommit itself to the Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine through awareness-building, accompaniment, and advocacy activities, including pilgrimage visits, sustained financial support, and other forms of economic stewardship; and

To call upon the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to underscore the call for economic initiatives by this church and its members in the “Peace, Not Walls” campaign. Such initiatives, in consultation with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, could include:

- purchasing of products from Palestinian providers and
- exploration of the feasibility of refusing to buy products produced in Israeli settlements. Also to be explored is the entire investment activity by this church. Examination of investments would exclude the option of divestiture.

The eleventh ELCA Churchwide Assembly in 2009 reaffirmed the ELCA’s commitment to eight highlighted tasks relative to the strategy:

1. Continue its awareness-building, accompaniment, and advocacy on behalf of a peaceful resolution of the conflict between Israel and Palestine;
2. Evaluate and refine its peace-making efforts to demonstrate as fully as possible the “balanced . . . care for all parties” expressed in the Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine (2005; Sect. II.A), while continuing our unique relationship with and accompaniment of Palestinian Christians and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL);
3. Learn more about the experiences of both Israelis and Palestinians and their mutual fears, aspirations, and hopes;
4. Work to convey the concerns and perspectives of Palestinians and Israelis that dispel stereotypes and caricatures and promote better understanding;
5. Lift up the voices within both communities, especially those of victims of violence, that seek peace with justice through nonviolent responses to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict;
6. Continue to help alleviate the humanitarian needs of all of those affected by the conflict, especially in Gaza;
7. Support U.S. funding that promotes peace and cooperation for all parties to the conflict; and
8. Continue to pray for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy

Land and for the Israeli and Palestinian peoples.

A sentence in the strategy was partially quoted in the second task. Taken from a list of “assumptions [that] undergird the ELCA’s commitment to intensify its work for peace with justice in Israel and Palestine,” it reads in full:

Balance. Effective ELCA action will be balanced in terms of its care for all parties in the conflict, but must address forthrightly imbalances of power as they play out in the lives of people in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

The Kairos Palestine document

One of the most significant developments in Christian response to the situation in Israel and Palestine since the eleventh ELCA Churchwide Assembly was the December 2009 release of the Kairos Palestine document. Titled “A Moment of Truth: A Word of Faith, Hope, and Love from the Heart of Palestinian Suffering,” the document marks an important shift in how Palestinian Christians raise their voice to describe their situation. Prepared by a broadly ecumenical group of Palestinian Christian scholars and theologians, the document addresses itself to several audiences, including western Christians. The document decries western Christian theologies that “offer a theological cover-up for the injustice we suffer, for the sin of the occupation imposed upon us” (6.1). The Palestinian Kairos group has not sought full agreement or “endorsement” of each of the ideas contained in the document. Rather, they request that their voice be heard and their perspective fully considered.

In his statement following the release of the Kairos Palestine document, Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson described it as an “authentic word from our brothers and sisters in the Palestinian Christian community” that “warrants our respect and attentiveness.” He said the appeal “is primarily a word of hope in a time of overwhelming pessimism in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a pessimism that could lead to despair. These Christian leaders’ words seek to clearly communicate both the depth of their disillusionment with current political realities and the resoluteness of their faith in God. We join with these Christians in expressing our hope that in this conflict and throughout the world, peace with justice may be realized.”

In addition, the Peace Not Walls (PNW) staff team offered comments to assist those who wished to learn more about or study the document. Their key points were that this document:

- is a pastoral document with several audiences;
- is primarily a word of hope;
- provides an authentic, though only partial, analysis of the conflict;
- does not deny Israel’s legitimacy or right to exist;
- seeks to restore dignity to both Palestinians and Israelis;
- addresses western Christians, particularly with regard to Christian Zionism;
- endorses economic measures as a means of non-violent resistance; and,
- places particular emphasis on the importance of Jerusalem.

Stewarding Economic Resources

The Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine addresses both the sense of urgency for this work and a commitment to the stewardship of

economic resources. In its first few pages, the strategy describes several factors creating a sense of urgency, including:

- The possibility of two viable, secure states living side-by-side in peace is waning due to 1) the placement and extension of the separation wall on Palestinian land; 2) the resultant loss of natural resources (e.g., water); 3) the expansion of Israeli settlements on Palestinian territory; and 4) the persistence of extremist factions in carrying out attacks on civilian targets.
- The indigenous Christian population in Israel and Palestine is shrinking, due in large part to Palestinian emigration to escape the economic, social, and political effects of Israeli occupation, including, most recently, the Israeli separation wall. Living in the midst of communities in crisis, the congregations, ministries, and schools of the Christian churches in Jerusalem and Palestine—including the Lutheran church—are at risk. Should the situation continue, the presence and witness of the living Church in the Holy Land could disappear completely within a few years.

Recent years also have also seen growing conversation about economic measures that may be considered as appropriate actions or statements responding to these and other factors. Often, these measures are targeted to address corporations that provide or receive goods and services from Israel. Several church bodies and church-related organizations, along with other expressions of civil society, have suggested various forms of boycott⁷, divestment⁸, and sanctions⁹.

A range of perspectives and passions surrounding these issues exists among our interreligious partners, among Palestinians and Israelis, and among ELCA members. Pr. Munib A. Younan, who serves both as bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) and as president of the Lutheran World Federation, has consistently advocated for positive investments for peace in the social and civil society institutions organized through the Lutheran presence in the Holy Land.

The Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine commits this church to “seek to expend God-given economic resources in ways that support the

⁷ A boycott has been defined as a collective effort to abstain from the purchase or use of products or services provided by a targeted firm, government, or other agency. The purpose of a boycott is to persuade the targeted entity to cease certain practices judged to be unjust, and/or to perform certain practices deemed to be just. Boycotts in the faith community have been taken both against an individual company—such as the Nestlé infant formula boycott that began in the 1970s—or an industry, such as the lettuce boycott of the 1980s. Boycotts only work if there is an economic impact and media coverage. The ELCA has a specific and restrictive procedure concerning any possible boycott

⁸The ELCA has no general policy to support or direct a procedure of divestment. As noted above, the 2007 Churchwide Assembly action explicitly excluded the option of exploring divestment relative to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Additionally, all separately incorporated entities of the ELCA, including the ELCA Board of Pensions, may choose to implement ELCA policy recommendations within their own guidelines and fiduciary responsibilities.

⁹ Sanctions are sometimes defined as punitive or restrictive measures taken, usually by several countries in concert, to pressure a country to change certain policies. For example, economic sanctions ban trade with a given country, while diplomatic sanctions can result in the withdrawal of relations and diplomatic representation. The 1995 ELCA social statement, *For Peace in God’s World*, states, “In support for just political structures, we ...acknowledge that the responsible use of sanctions may on occasion be the most effective and least harmful measure to lead states to stop oppressing their people....”

quest for a just peace in the Holy Land” and describes a variety of economic initiatives, including:

- Supporting generously ministries in the Holy Land.
- Promoting positive economic development in the region to help those most in need (e.g., support for Palestinian businesses, including the establishment of micro-loans).
- Making consumer decisions that favor support to those in greatest need (e.g., Palestinian providers as distinct from Israel settlers on Palestinian territory).
- Managing collective or personal investments with concern for their impact on the lives of all Holy Land peoples who suffer from the ongoing conflict.

In addition, the ELCA Corporate Social Responsibility program in 2005 developed a response to the Churchwide Assembly’s action urging ELCA members to participate in the PNW campaign. After study, the Advisory Committee on Corporate Responsibility (ACCSR) recommended, in part, that it consider the opportunities and limitations for fulfilling the mandate of the PNW campaign relative to the stewardship of resources, specifically in the area of multinational corporations that have established facilities or operations in the Occupied Territories (as defined by the United Nations). In April 2009, ACCSR approved a guide for congregations, synods, and Lutheran institutions for developing a selective purchasing policy, including a section on the Middle East. In addition, the PNW campaign website describes a variety of possible positive investments in the Palestinian economy that can be made through traveling, purchasing crafts, and supporting the ELCJHL schools, Augusta Victoria Hospital and Global Mission personnel. The ACCSR has assisted in the development of Economic Social Criteria Investment Screens. This document currently is in the process of revision.

2011 Churchwide Assembly
Action regarding "Peace Not Walls" Campaign

Assembly Action: CA 11.04.27

Yes- 868

No- 73

To receive with gratitude, the memorials of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Lower Susquehanna, and Metropolitan Washington, D.C., synods related to investment for positive change in Palestine;

To encourage members, congregations, synods, and agencies of this church to:

1. seek ways to achieve a deeper understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including the perspectives of other faith communities, and receive, read, and discuss the Kairos Palestine document as an "authentic word from our brothers and sisters in the Palestinian Christian community" that "warrants our respect and attentiveness";
2. affirm this church's commitment to non-violent responses to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including the Peace Not Walls campaign's efforts toward strengthening accompaniment, awareness-building, and advocacy; and
3. consider making positive economic investments in those Palestinian projects and businesses that peacefully strengthen the economic and social fabric of Palestinian society;

To commend the policy "ELCA Economic Social Criteria Investment Screens" to the members, congregations, synods, and agencies of this church; and

To decline to undertake a review of the investment of funds managed within the ELCA but to commend these recommendations to the Office of the Treasurer, the Office of the Secretary, the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, the Mission Advancement unit, and the ELCA Board of Pensions for consideration.

2013 Churchwide Assembly

Background for Memorials regarding "Peace Not Walls" Campaign¹⁰

A "Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine" was adopted by the ELCA Church Council in April 2005 (CC05.04.12). The churchwide strategy calls for accompaniment of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), and ecumenical and other partners. The ninth ELCA Churchwide Assembly, in August 2005, urged "members, congregations, synods, the churchwide organization, and church-related agencies and institutions . . . to participate in the churchwide campaign for peace—*Peace Not Walls: Stand for Justice in the Holy Land*—by engaging in awareness-building, accompaniment, and advocacy activities. . . ." (CA05.06.23)

The tenth ELCA Churchwide Assembly in 2007 (CA07.06.30):

4. [called] upon the ELCA, in all of its expressions, to recommit itself to the Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine through awareness-building, accompaniment, and advocacy activities, including pilgrimage visits, sustained financial support, and other forms of economic stewardship; and
5. [called] upon the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to underscore the call for economic initiatives by this church and its members in the "Peace, Not Walls" campaign. Such initiatives, in consultation with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, could include:
 - purchasing of products from Palestinian providers and
 - exploration of the feasibility of refusing to buy products produced in Israeli settlements. Also to be explored is the entire investment activity by this church. Examination of investments would exclude the option of divestiture.

Inherent in this strategy is a focus on peacemaking through positive incentives rather than punitive actions. This can be noted in the memorial of the Southwestern Texas Synod, which advocates "positive approaches rather than punitive actions," and calls for specific steps to reach this goal, using "positive incentives to the governments of both Israel and Palestine to act to address and ameliorate all human rights abuses and violations of international law." In addition, the ELCA has made a clear distinction between constructive investment and divestment. Divestment singles out one side for censure, has limited effectiveness, takes a long time to have any effect, and is highly problematic from legal and fiduciary perspectives.

The strategy also calls for accompaniment of "Palestinians and Israelis in nonviolent efforts to end the occupation." It calls for "peace with justice in Israel and Palestine" as well as "for a viable, contiguous, independent Palestinian state and a secure Israel." The strategy encourages solidarity with both Israelis and Palestinians who share the strategy's goals. Throughout its history, the ELCA has expressed solidarity with various peoples, but never with a nation state or

¹⁰ From *2013 Pre-Assembly Report: Report of the Memorials Committee*, 66-67.

government; hence, in this strategy, it does not express solidarity with either the State of Israel or the Palestinian Authority. Throughout its history, the ELCA has not aligned itself with specific national political movements and has raised serious questions about the legitimacy of some, especially those which foment hatred, exclusivity, and ethnic cleansing. The ELCA has not commented on the value of any political self-expression but has committed itself to confronting religious extremism in all its forms. The strategy is now in its eighth year of implementation through the *Peace Not Walls* (PNW) campaign.

While there has been little overall political progress toward solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and thus much disappointment, the strategy has been the basis for realizing a number of notable accomplishments since the 2011 Churchwide Assembly which can provide the basis for more activities in the coming months. In the area of awareness-building, PNW has distributed more than 5,000 map cards, which outline the loss of Palestinian lands since 1948; has established webpages with a variety of resources, such as a blog, handouts, videos, presentations, and worship materials; and has encouraged individuals and congregations to participate in the Ecumenical Prayer Vigil for Peace in the Middle East initiated by the ACT Palestine Forum in December 2012. The 2008 video, "Peace Not Walls: Making a Difference in the Holy Land," has continued to be distributed widely to synods and congregations.

In the area of accompaniment, regular visits have been made to the region to be with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) as well as to assist their leaders, members, and youth in visits to various locations and meetings in the United States. Thirty ELCA members have been selected for service with the ELCJHL as part of the Young Adults in Global Mission program. Twenty ELCA members have served with the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel. To enhance our companions' economic well-being, the Peace Not Walls webpages facilitate the purchase of Palestinian products from Lutheran and other Christian ministries.

With respect to advocacy, the ELCA continues to be active in extensive ecumenical and interfaith work through organizations such as Churches for Middle East Peace, the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East (NILI), and a Christian-Jewish dialogue group coordinated by the National Council of Churches and the American Jewish Committee (which was temporarily suspended due to Christian-Jewish tensions over the October 5 letter). Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson is widely recognized for his leadership on Middle East issues through his involvement in NILI and in these other forums.

In addition, several specific advocacy activities undertaken in recent months have been a continuation of the call for a cessation of all Israeli settlement activities and withdrawal from settlements on Palestinian territory to the 1967 boundaries; a recommendation to study and reflect upon *A moment of truth: A word of faith and hope from the heart of Palestinian suffering*, the *Kairos Palestine* document, as an authentic expression of Palestinian Christians; and the communication in October 2012 of a letter to Members of Congress requesting that hearings be held to review Israel's compliance with U.S. law in its utilization of U.S. military assistance. Concerning the 2007 action above which, among other things, called for exploration of the feasibility of refusing to buy products produced

in Israeli settlements, staff have explored this question, determined that it is indeed possible to refuse to buy products produced in Israeli settlements, and will continue to make available relevant information on the “Peace Not Walls” and “Corporate Social Responsibility” webpages. At the synodical and local levels, a national database of ELCA members active in promoting Middle East peace is helping to raise awareness and is leading ecumenical and interreligious advocacy efforts.

The ELCA strategy stresses the importance of working with those who seek nonviolent means to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as well as with those who share the goals of peace with justice and a commitment to peace as outlined in the strategy. The campaign has undertaken a number of efforts to create greater awareness of the dire situation of the neighbor or “other” in the conflict. Furthermore, this church has encouraged those in conflict to seek peaceful means that respect the dignity of all people and the integrity of all parties. To these ends, dialogue between Lutherans and Jews as well as Lutherans and Muslims are encouraged in order to engender awareness, mutual respect, and relationships of integrity. In addition, this church has addressed how Christian faith and love are central to relationships with the Jewish and Muslim communities.

As noted earlier, the strategy has both called for mutual understanding between Israelis and Palestinians and lauded efforts that seek to promote such understanding. Some examples of those efforts lifted up in various media include the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land (a collaborative effort of Jewish, Muslim, and Christian leaders in the area) and the Parents Circle—Families Forum, which brings together the bereaved relatives of both Israelis and Palestinians killed in the conflict to move toward reconciliation rather than hatred or revenge.

2013 Churchwide Assembly
Action Regarding "Peace Not Walls" Campaign

Assembly Action: CA 13.06.25
Yes- 812
No- 45

To receive with gratitude the memorials of the Southwestern Texas, Saint Paul Area, Rocky Mountain, Southeast Michigan, Oregon, Sierra Pacific, Northwest Washington, Greater Milwaukee, Southwest California, Southeastern Iowa, Northeastern Pennsylvania, Indiana/Kentucky, New England, Lower Susquehanna, Upper Susquehanna, Metropolitan Washington, D.C., and Minneapolis Area synods related to Peacemaking with Justice in 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. Learn more about the experiences of both Israelis and Palestinians and their mutual fears, aspirations, and hopes;
3. Work to convey the concerns and perspectives of Palestinians and Israelis that dispel stereotypes and caricatures and promote better understanding;
4. Lift up the voices within both communities, especially those of victims of violence, that seek peace with justice through nonviolent responses to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict;
5. Continue to help alleviate the humanitarian needs of all of those affected by the conflict;
6. Support U.S. funding that promotes peace and cooperation for all parties to the conflict; and
7. Continue to pray for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land and our brothers and sisters in the Middle East;

To reaffirm the 2011 Churchwide Assembly action [CA11.04.27] to receive, read, and discuss the Kairos Palestine document as an "authentic word from our brothers and sisters in the Palestinian Christian community" that "warrants our respect and attentiveness;"

To reaffirm the 2011 Churchwide Assembly action [CA11.04.27] "to commend the policy, 'ELCA Economic Social Criteria Investment Screens,' to the members, congregations, synods, and agencies of this church; and to decline to undertake a review of the investment of funds managed within the ELCA but to commend these recommendations to the Office of the Treasurer, the Office of the Secretary, the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, the Mission Advancement unit, and the ELCA Board of Pensions for consideration;"

To encourage this church's members, congregations, synods, and agencies to call on the President of the United States and their representatives in Congress to

commit to a goal of facilitating a just and peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; and

To refer to the Global Mission unit, the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, the Mission Advancement unit, the Office of the Secretary, the Office of the Treasurer, and Portico Benefit Services the matter of evaluating possibilities for investing in specific Palestinian economic endeavors and other projects that would promote peace and cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians; and to provide a report with recommendations to the April 2014 meeting of the Church Council.

2016 Churchwide Assembly

Background for Memorials Regarding "Peace Not Walls" Campaign¹¹

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

¹¹ From *2016 Pre-Assembly Report: Report of the Memorials Committee*, 99-100.

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, 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.

2016 Churchwide Assembly

Background for Memorials Regarding "Peace Not Walls" Campaign¹²

Category C2: Justice for the Holy Land through Responsible Investment

For more than a decade, attention has been drawn to the impact of the presence of foreign companies and corporations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. There has been ongoing debate about whether their presence has been chiefly positive, i.e. of great benefit to the local Palestinian people and economy, or largely negative, ... having a detrimental effect or, even worse, contributing to Israeli violations of internationally-recognized human rights related to the Occupation. The ELCA social message on "[The Israeli/Palestinian conflict](#)" (1989) demonstrates this church's long-standing and insistent call "for the cessation of human rights abuses against the Palestinians, because of the Israeli occupation." (p.1)

The 2005 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America affirmed the "Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine," more popularly known as the "Peace Not Walls: Stand for Justice in the Holy Land" campaign. Part of that strategy included advocacy related to 'Stewarding Economic Resources'. It committed the ELCA to explore economic initiatives, such as ...

- b. Promoting positive economic development in the region to help those most in need (e.g., support for Palestinian businesses, including the establishment of micro-loans) ...
- d. Making consumer decisions that favor support to those in greatest need (e.g., Palestinian providers as distinct from Israel settlers on Palestinian territory) [and]
- e. Managing collective or personal investments with concern for their impact on the lives of all Holy Land peoples who suffer from the ongoing conflict.

The 2007 Churchwide Assembly called

... upon the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to underscore the call for economic initiatives by this church and its members in the "Peace, Not Walls" campaign. Such initiatives, in consultation with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, could include:

- purchasing of products from Palestinian providers and
- exploration of the feasibility of refusing to buy products produced in Israeli settlements. Also to be explored is the entire investment activity by this church. Examination of investments would exclude the option of divestiture.

¹² From *2016 Pre-Assembly Report: Report of the Memorials Committee*, 102-105.

The 2011 Churchwide Assembly voted

To encourage members, congregations, synods, and agencies of this church to:

1. seek ways to achieve a deeper understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including the perspectives of other faith communities, and receive, read, and discuss the Kairos Palestine document as an “authentic word from our brothers and sisters in the Palestinian Christian community” that “warrants our respect and attentiveness”;
2. affirm this church's commitment to non-violent responses to the Israeli- Palestinian conflict, including the Peace Not Walls campaign's efforts toward strengthening accompaniment, awareness-building, and advocacy; and
3. consider making positive economic investments in those Palestinian projects and businesses that peacefully strengthen the economic and social fabric of Palestinian society;

To commend the policy “ELCA Economic Social Criteria Investment Screens” to the members, congregations, synods, and agencies of this church; and

To decline to undertake a review of the investment of funds managed within the ELCA but to commend these recommendations to the Office of the Treasurer, the Office of the Secretary, the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, the Mission Advancement unit, and the ELCA Board of Pensions for consideration.

The 2013 Churchwide Assembly voted, among other things,

To reaffirm the 2011 Churchwide Assembly action [CA 11.04.27] “to commend the policy, ‘ELCA Economic Social Criteria Investment Screens,’ to the members, congregations, synods, and agencies of this church; and to decline to undertake a review of the investment of funds managed within the ELCA but to commend these recommendations to the Office of the Treasurer, the Office of the Secretary, the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, the Mission Advancement unit, and the ELCA Board of Pensions for consideration;” [and]

To refer to the Global Mission unit, the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, the Mission Advancement unit, the Office of the Secretary, the Office of the Treasurer, and Portico Benefit Services the matter of evaluating possibilities for investing in specific Palestinian economic endeavors and other projects that would promote peace and cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians; and to provide a report with recommendations to the April 2014 meeting of the Church Council.

As a result of the 2013 action, an *ad hoc* staff group was convened and prepared a report that was received by the Church Council at its November 2015 meeting. The report noted that consultations took place with Bishop Munib Younan of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), Palestinian entrepreneurs and financial institutions, such as the Bank of Palestine, the named units as well as the Mission Investment Fund, and a review was made of the work of other denominations, specifically the Presbyterian Foundation and the Episcopal Church.

Determining possible parameters of “investment” was critical to the process and a continuum of investment options available to the ELCA were examined. The group looked at traditional (financial) investment practices as well as the possibilities for other forms of economic investment (such as microfinance and online commerce). It also examined social investment or philanthropy; that is investing in the lives of people and communities without expectation for a financial return. The entities which manage ELCA financial resources (including Portico Benefit Services) explained that they implement ELCA guidelines for social criteria investment screens along a continuum, while maintaining their fiduciary responsibility to be effective stewards of the funds entrusted to them.

The ELCA’s social criteria investment screens provide a guide for this church with regard to corporate social responsibility (CSR). They delineate areas in which the ELCA would like to invest or refrain from (future) investing and provide criteria to evaluate the scope of CSR work. The objective of social criteria investment screens is to identify the dimensions of a given problem area and, within those dimensions, to focus on egregious problems that are most critical to address. All social criteria investment screens have the overall objective of addressing the ELCA’s concern for the social, environmental, as well as economic sustainability of corporations.

Social criteria investment screens do not constitute binding mandates or provide, for example, specific lists of corporations. It is the responsibility of the ELCA and each ELCA-related organization and individual Lutherans to develop and manage a prudent and responsible investment portfolio. The ELCA social criteria investment screens offer a context for decision-making about socially responsible investments.

Divestment is the act of selling an asset for the purpose of implementing either financial, legal, or social goals. Historically, some investors have used this tool to protest a particular corporate policy such as Apartheid in Southern Africa. The ELCA policy related to divestment is limited to the 2007 action cited above. The intention of several of the synod memorials above is to change that policy with respect to U.S. businesses operating in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. It should also be noted that all separately incorporated entities of the ELCA including Portico, may choose to implement ELCA policy recommendations within their own guidelines and fiduciary duties.

In the context of the staff group report to the November 2015 Church Council meeting, Portico reported that it was initiating Social Impact First investing in order to strive for greater social impact. Portico noted that it had been collaborating with ecumenical partners to learn more about potential investments in Palestine. However, it is uniquely challenging to uphold fiduciary responsibility while investing in Palestine. Given the volatility of the Middle East, the economic constraints inherent in the Occupation of Palestine, and the very low volume of options available, the financial return of investment in the region is well below market rate and considered high risk. Therefore, because of the fiduciary duty of the aforementioned entities, opportunities for financial investment in Palestine are rather limited. Similarly, economic investment, as understood in a free market, is significantly restrained under the Israeli occupation where freedom of movement of people and goods is restricted; where access to education, healthcare and employment opportunities are restricted; and where access to and development of land is restricted.

Staff of the churchwide organization also researched options in microfinance and online commerce, however, none of the microfinance options offered designated investing in Palestine; and the projects seeking funding in online commerce suit individual investors, not large scale investing.

The ELCA is dedicated to long-term social investment with long-standing financial commitments to our companion church, the ELCJHL, and related partners in Palestine. Therefore, the ELCA's social investment return can be found in the ELCA's engagement with the ELCJHL, The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) – Jerusalem, and other entities. From Fiscal Year 2012 to Fiscal Year 2014, the ELCA gave over \$2.2 million in grants to the ELCJHL, the LWF-operated Augusta Victoria Hospital, and to smaller initiatives like the Peace Center for the Blind. The Mission Investment Fund, reaching beyond its primarily domestic mission, loaned \$1.2 million to Dar Al-Kalima College (also a beneficiary of the Presbyterian Foundation) and \$1.5 million to the ELCJHL for the construction of the Baptismal Pilgrimage Site and Retreat Center at the Jordan River in Jordan.

In receiving the November 2015 report, the Church Council commended the ELCA's current social investment commitments to the ELCJHL, the LWF and other companions in the region.

In addition to ongoing research to identify positive investment opportunities to promote peace in the Holy Land, there are other aspects of Portico's social purpose investing approach to keep in mind. For example, Portico does not have a practice of divestment, nor does it recommend divestment, but rather implements a screening process consistent with ELCA social criteria screens. If an ELCA investment screen addressing companies connected with preventing peace in the Holy Land were to be developed, Portico would participate and consider the screen for implementation in the social purpose portfolios taking into account its fiduciary responsibility to its plan members. From Portico's perspective, the advantage of a screening approach is it offers flexibility and context for on-going decision making without being tied to a specific list of companies up front

which can become outdated. Portico believes screening, as opposed to specific company divestment lists, provides more flexibility and a framework to address the changing situations in the world of business where some of the named companies have recently announced restructuring directly related to the issues raised in memorials. For example, HP announced it was spinning off HP Enterprise, the segment of HP that created and supported the finger print and facial recognition system named in the memorial. HP Enterprise will now become part of Computer Sciences Corp. which is not named in the memorial.

Turning to the matter of Lutheran-Jewish relations, the ELCA inherited significant work in Jewish relations from its predecessor bodies and the Lutheran World Federation. In 1994, acting under the mandate of the Churchwide Assembly, the ELCA Church Council adopted the "Declaration of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to the Jewish Community," rejecting Luther's later anti-Judaic writings, acknowledging their tragic effects throughout history, and reaching out in reconciliation and relationship to the Jewish Community. Anti-Semitism is denounced as "a contradiction and an affront to the Gospel, a violation of our hope and calling." Over the past two decades, the ELCA has lived out the commitments contained in this declaration through various forms of dialogue and cooperation, and through a variety of educational initiatives. One role the ELCA has played is to serve as a place where the concerns of Palestinian Lutherans and the concerns of American Jews have been in conversation. For example, some Jewish leaders have interceded with the U.S. government, some directly with the government of Israel, and some with both on issues of concern for the ELCA and the ELCJHL, including the recognition of the ELCJHL, and the critical funding for the ministries of Augusta Victoria Hospital.

Some ELCA ecumenical partners have considered or adopted policies of divestment in recent years, resulting in tensions or breaks in Jewish-Christian relations at various levels. For some within the American Jewish community, divestment is interpreted as anti-Jewish. Therefore, divestment must be considered alongside the continuation of dialogue and partnership with the American Jewish community at all levels with respect to a lasting peace in Israel and Palestine.

While the above actions have been undertaken within this church, the memorials addressed to the 2016 CWA assess the situation of human rights abuse as dire enough to justify the dramatic response of divestment from U.S. based corporations, in particular those identified in the memorials. The memorials argue that a stronger institutional response by the ELCA is needed because these particular corporations profit from and contribute to human rights abuses in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Rationale from the Memorials Committee

While the memorials submitted by a number of synod assemblies requested divestment, the Memorials Committee is recommending the development of a social criteria investment screen. Using a social criteria investment screen guides this church in evaluating the types of investments it wishes to hold. It is an application of the church's existing social teachings. Since we have an

established Corporate Social Responsibility mechanism, the Memorials Committee recommends a screen as the best way to address human rights abuses in Israel and Palestine as well as throughout the world. A social criteria investment screen on human rights will provide Portico with ongoing guidance and an important framework to make decisions that provides for fiduciary responsibility. In addition, screens allow investors to still participate with a corporation in addressing the problems whereas a divestment approach does not allow for such engagement.

2016 Churchwide Assembly

Action Regarding "Peace Not Walls" Campaign

Assembly Action: CA 16.06.27

Vote by Card

To receive with gratitude the memorials from the Sierra Pacific, Southwest California, Metropolitan New York and the Delaware-Maryland synods regarding Justice for the Holy Land through Responsible Investment;

To reaffirm the actions of the 2005, 2007, 2011 and 2013 Churchwide Assemblies regarding responsible investment in Israel-Palestine;

To direct the ELCA's Corporate Social Responsibility review team to develop a human rights social criteria investment screen based on the social teachings of this church and, in the case of Israel and Palestine, specifically based on the concerns raised in the ELCA Middle East Strategy;

To encourage ELCA members, congregations, synods, agencies and institutions to increase positive investment in Palestine and other under-resourced areas where human rights abuses materially impact the well-being of all people; and

To encourage ELCA members, congregations, synods, agencies and institutions to engage in shareholder advocacy in support of human rights, exercising the right of a shareholder to submit resolutions at a corporation's annual meeting.

Note: The ELCA Churchwide Assembly voted by a large majority to adopt the action above. The vote was cast by green and red cards (rather than electronic voting) and so there is no official number. Many observers suggest it was 90+% in favor.

2019 Churchwide Assembly

Background for Memorials Regarding "Peace Not Walls" Campaign¹³

Category B1: Just Peace

Background

Since its inception, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has taken up the issue of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In 2005, a Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine (Strategy) was developed that summarized then-current policy and outlined proposed outcomes with respect to accompaniment, awareness-raising and advocacy. Among the Strategy's outcomes were:

a. Israelis and Palestinians coexisting in justice and peace, as citizens of viable and secure Israeli and Palestinian states.

b. A reduction in poverty and unemployment among Palestinians and access to basic services (e.g., health care, education).

Mid-range outcomes:

- An end to Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories.
- An end to terrorism and violence by individuals, groups and states.
- The establishment of and international support for a viable, contiguous Palestinian state.

Short-range outcomes:

- 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.

c. 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.

The Strategy also sought "stronger advocacy by the ELCA and its members with the U.S. government that reflects the urgency of the situation in Israel and Palestine and provides a more effective voice for peace with justice in the region. This will be done, wherever possible, in partnership with ecumenical and other partners." ELCA staff participate in several ecumenical coalitions and interreligious dialogues where advocacy about the conflict is taken up.

To these ends, the ELCA established a "Peace Not Walls" campaign to achieve these and all the other desired outcomes in the Strategy.

Over the years, the ELCA has supported legislative and executive branch initiatives to achieve a negotiated final settlement, uphold Palestinian human rights throughout the West Bank and Gaza, promote freer movement and access for Palestinians in the occupied territories, halt all Israeli settlement activity in the

¹³ From *2019 Pre-Assembly Report: Report of the Memorials Committee*, 26-28.

territories, halt construction of the Wall/barrier outside the pre-1967 de facto border between Israel and Jordan, stop home demolitions and land confiscation, assist Palestinian refugees in the West Bank and Gaza as well as those residing elsewhere in neighboring countries, etc.

On the ground, however, the conflict has worsened. In late May 2019, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process said:

"The prolonged absence of a political horizon to resolve the broader conflict has coincided with a steady deterioration of the living conditions of Palestinians. This, coupled with violence, settlement expansion, demolitions of Palestinian property, and the persistent threat of further economic decline, are creating an explosive mix that could have serious security implications."

Noting recent intense fighting between Israeli forces and Palestinian militants from Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Gaza, the UN Special Coordinator reiterated "the call by the Secretary-General who condemned in the strongest terms the launching of rockets from Gaza into Israel, particularly the targeting of civilian population centres and also call on Israel to exercise maximum restraint and refrain from using lethal force against protesters, except as a last resort." A recent UN summary about Gaza stated:

"The Gaza Strip faces an unprecedented humanitarian crisis, impacting the livelihoods and access to essential services by its two million residents. This crisis has been driven by over 11 years of an Israeli blockade and an unsolved internal Palestinian divide, exacerbated since March 2018 by the massive increase in Palestinian casualties in the context of demonstrations taking place near Israel's perimeter fence, as well as limited escalations in hostilities."

As in previous years, West Bank demolitions (of homes and other structures) and displacement continued in 2019. A recent UN report stated, "April saw the highest number of demolitions in a single month in more than two years and over 50 percent of all demolitions this year occurred in East Jerusalem." Between 2011 and 2018 more than 5,000 structures were demolished and more than 7,700 people displaced.

The Israeli human rights group monitoring violations in the occupied Palestinian territories, B'Tselem, reports:

"From 1967 through 2017, over 200 Israeli settlements were established in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem); their current population is almost 620,000. Settlements impinge on Palestinian human rights throughout the West Bank as their influence far exceeds the boundaries of the lands seized to build them: checkpoints that limit Palestinian movement are erected based on where there are settlements; Palestinian[s] are denied access to farmland near settlements; the route of the Separation Barrier was placed inside the West Bank so as to leave as many settlements as possible to the west of it."

Following the 2005 Churchwide Assembly, subsequent assemblies continued to address the issues.

Of particular relevance to this memorial from the Southeastern Minnesota Synod are at least two actions from 2007 and 2016 churchwide assemblies.

Part of the 2007 Assembly action was:

“To call upon the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to underscore the call for economic initiatives by this church and its members in the “Peace, Not Walls” campaign. Such initiatives, in consultation with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, could include:

- *purchasing of products from Palestinian providers and*
- *exploration of the feasibility of refusing to buy products produced in Israeli settlements. Also to be explored is the entire investment activity by this church. Examination of investments would exclude the option of divestiture.”* [CA07.06.30]

In 2016, that Churchwide Assembly, among other things, voted:
“To direct the ELCA’s Corporate Social Responsibility review team to develop a human rights social criteria investment screen based on the social teachings of this church and, in the case of Israel and Palestine, specifically based on the concerns raised in the ELCA Middle East Strategy; ...” [CA16.06.31]

In November 2017, the Church Council adopted a Human Rights social message that was requested, in part, to assist in the development of the mandated human rights social criteria investment screen.

At its August 2018 board meeting, Portico Benefit Services’ board of trustees approved the ELCA Human Rights screen for future use in its Social Purpose investment portfolios. The screen states, *“The ELCA recommends not investing in corporations benefiting from the most egregious denial of the rights of humans as political and civic beings to have equal access and participation in legal and political decisions affecting them.”* Implementation began in April 2019.

Currently, the ELCA has several screens that limit or prohibit investments in certain products and/or commercial activities: alcohol; environment; gambling; nuclear, biological or chemical weapons research and development or certain conventional weapons; pornography; private, for-profit prisons; and tobacco.

This memorial pertains to the ministry of the ELCA by being another tool to implement *Future Directions 2025* and supporting the teachings of several ELCA social statements and messages. It embraces goal four of *Future Directions 2025*: *“A visible church deeply committed to working ecumenically and with other people of faith for justice, peace and reconciliation in communities and around the world.”*

2019 Churchwide Assembly

Background for Memorials Regarding “Peace Not Walls” Campaign¹⁴

Category B2: Palestine (No Way to Treat a Child)

In the Israeli-controlled occupied Palestinian territories (East Jerusalem and the West Bank), Israeli security forces utilize a military detention system to address alleged violations of the military law it has imposed. Nearly half of the Palestinian population in the West Bank is under the age of 18, but no distinction is made in how children are treated despite Israel being a state party to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Human Rights Watch and B'Tselem have documented evidence of how children are treated; for example, being hand-tied, blindfolded, removed from their homes in the middle of the night, abused verbally, intimidated and/or forced to sign statements in Hebrew (of which few have knowledge), etc. Further background information was provided in several of the memorials.

These memorials further the ministry of the ELCA by being another tool to implement Future Directions 2025 and supporting the teachings of several ELCA's social statements and messages. They embrace goal four of Future Directions 2025: “A visible church deeply committed to working ecumenically and with other people of faith for justice, peace and reconciliation in communities and around the world.”

¹⁴ From *2019 Pre-Assembly Report: Report of the Memorials Committee*, 28-34.

2019 Churchwide Assembly

Background for Memorials Regarding "Peace Not Walls" Campaign¹⁵

Category B3: Augusta Victoria Hospital

Augusta Victoria Hospital (AVH), owned and operated by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), is a center of medical excellence in East Jerusalem, serving the five million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. As one of the six hospitals in the East Jerusalem Hospitals Network, AVH offers specialized care not available in other hospitals in the West Bank and Gaza, including radiation therapy for cancer patients and pediatric hemodialysis.

AVH receives patients from the West Bank and Gaza referred by the Palestinian Ministry of Health. Approximately 30% of the cancer patients treated at AVH are from Gaza. AVH, located on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, is accredited by the Joint Commission International for its outstanding quality and is also fully licensed by the Israeli Ministry of Health. AVH is supported by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and several other member churches of the LWF around the globe.

In the last decade the U.S. government, through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), invested nearly \$10 million in AVH to bolster its capacity as a cancer center. In addition, the U.S. government provided, over several years, tens of millions of dollars in aid to help cover the costs of the cancer patients and others referred to AVH and the other East Jerusalem hospitals by the Palestinian Authority.

For several years, AVH and other East Jerusalem hospitals have been facing cash-flow problems because of the inability of the Palestinian Authority (PA) to pay on a regular basis the bills of the patients it refers to these hospitals. From 2017 onward, the PA introduced regular monthly payments, but there is still a considerable debt to AVH and the other East Jerusalem hospitals related to the patient referrals. As of April 2019, the total debt owed to the six hospitals amounted to approximately USD 85 million and for AVH alone the PA debt was over USD 38 million. The accumulated PA debt makes it increasingly difficult to pay pharmaceutical suppliers for cancer medications, pay staff and avoid further interruption in the treatment of patients.

AVH and the five other East Jerusalem hospitals rely on funding each year from the U.S. and the European Union (EU) to cover approximately half of the costs of patients referred to these hospitals by the Palestinian Authority. The U.S. Congress approved USD 25 million for the financial years 2017 and 2018 to be paid to the PA to help cover the bills of the West Bank and Gaza patients that are treated in the East Jerusalem hospitals.

In 2018, the Administration cut the FY 2017 funding to the East Jerusalem

¹⁵ From *2019 Pre-Assembly Report: Report of the Memorials Committee*, 25-39.

hospitals, making it all the more urgent in the short-term to encourage the Administration to release the FY 2018 funding. Further background information can be found [here](#). In fall 2018, the ELCA Conference of Bishops issued a statement of concern. Subsequently, and on the basis of their shared concern for the East Jerusalem Hospitals Network, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton and Bishop Bill Gafkjen (chair, ELCA Conference of Bishops) were joined by Presiding Bishop Michael Curry of The Episcopal Church, and Bishop Joseph Bambera and Archbishop Timothy Broglio of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in a similar statement.

As noted by the Congressional Research Service, “the Anti-Terrorism Clarification Act of 2018 became law on October 3, 2018. Congress passed the law in the wake of a U.S. federal court case dealing with past acts of terrorism by Palestinians.... The law amended the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) (at 18 U.S.C. 2334) by stating that a defendant consents to personal jurisdiction in U.S. federal court for lawsuits related to international terrorism if the defendant accepts certain types of U.S. foreign aid after the law has been in effect for 120 days. In December, Palestinian Authority (PA) Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah wrote to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo that the PA would not accept aid that subjected it to federal court jurisdiction. Consequently, U.S. bilateral aid to the Palestinians ended on January 31, 2019.”

Since U.S. funding for AVH would normally pass through the PA as noted above, the Anti-Terrorism Clarification Act is a further impediment to the restoration of U.S. funding of the East Jerusalem hospitals.

In late August 2018, the Administration eliminated all funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the U.S. having been the agency’s largest donor since its inception in 1949. The Administration said that the U.S. is “no longer willing to shoulder the very disproportionate share of the burden of UNRWA’s costs that we had assumed for many years” and that “the fundamental business model and fiscal practices that have marked UNRWA for years—tied to UNRWA’s endlessly and exponentially expanding community of entitled beneficiaries—is simply unsustainable.” Also, according to the Congressional Research Service, in response “UNRWA Commissioner-General Pierre Krähenbühl said that the responsibility for the protracted nature of the refugee issue ‘lies squarely with the parties and in the international community’s lack of will or utter inability to bring about a negotiated and peaceful resolution of the conflict,’ and that attempting to hold UNRWA responsible is ‘disingenuous at best.’” Further details are available [here](#).

These memorials further the ministry of the ELCA by being another tool to implement Future Directions 2025 and supporting the teachings of several ELCA’s social statements and messages. They embrace goal four of Future Directions 2025: “A visible church deeply committed to working ecumenically and with other people of faith for justice, peace and reconciliation in communities and around the world.”

2019 Churchwide Assembly

Background for Memorials Regarding "Peace Not Walls" Campaign¹⁶

Category B4: Engagement in the Holy Land

The ELCA's 2005 Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine includes, in its section on awareness building, a call "to listen to the voices of Palestinians and Israelis through visits to the region in coordination with local partners."

It is important to recall some additional excerpts from the strategy relevant to the memorials under discussion. Activities concerning building awareness and relationships will be "undertaken in close collaboration and cooperation with other churches and ecumenical and interfaith partners who share a similar commitment to peace in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

"The ELCA also has called upon its members to accompany Palestinians and Israelis in nonviolent efforts to end the occupation."

The strategy's "assumptions [that] undergird the ELCA's commitment to intensify its work for peace with justice in Israel and Palestine" include: "The relationship of the ELCA with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land is a primary relationship that will shape the ELCA effort, in tandem with ministries of the Lutheran World Federation, ecumenical partners, and the work of Jews and Israelis who share the goal of peace with justice."

This is reinforced by commitment six in the recommended proposed "A Declaration of Inter-Religious Commitment," which reads: "The ELCA will explore and encourage inter-religious friendship, accompaniment, and partnership with all who seek justice, peace, human wholeness, and the well-being of creation [ELCA Constitution, Chapter 4.03.f]."

Also, from the strategy: "Balance. Effective ELCA action will be balanced in terms of its care for all parties in the conflict, but must address forthrightly imbalances of power as they play out in the lives of people in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories."

Among the foreseen Interfaith Outcomes, one is: "Increased cooperation and collaboration between the ELCA and Jewish groups in the U.S.—and with groups within Israel—that seek peace with justice in Israel and Palestine."

The "Peace Not Walls" campaign staff have been carrying these (as well as other) aspects of the churchwide strategy as, in the context of accompaniment, it engages with persons who hold a range of perspectives on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This is particularly true as staff suggest possible appointments for groups visiting the Holy Land.

¹⁶ From *2019 Pre-Assembly Report: Report of the Memorials Committee*, 39-41.

In addition, when senior ELCA leadership visit the Holy Land, together with ELCJHL leaders, they meet with staff in the Israeli Foreign Ministry and with local rabbis. They also meet with Israelis who share the goal of peace with justice as noted above. Schedule constraints often do not allow for additional meetings with other Israelis. Church leaders have also met with representatives of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel who have participated in the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land.

The ELCA also participates in a national Christian-Jewish dialogue where information about the views of both American Jews and Israeli Jews (as well as those of others) about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are exchanged.

2019 Churchwide Assembly

Action Regarding “Peace Not Walls” Campaign

Assembly Action: CA19.02.09 YES-829; NO-33

Four memorials (B1, B2, B3, and B4) related to Peace Not Walls were approved en bloc with a group of memorials on a range of topics.

Category B1: Just Peace

To acknowledge the adoption of the human rights social message [CC17.11.26] and the human rights social criteria investment screen [CC18.04.12i] developed in part to address concerns related to investments; and

To commend and encourage Portico Benefit Services to continue its implementation of the human rights social criteria investment screen as it relates to investments in Israel and Palestine.

Category B2: Palestine (No Way to Treat a Child)

To urge ELCA members and the presiding bishop to correspond with the U.S. president, the U.S. Department of State and members of Congress, asking them to:

- a) urge the State of Israel to guarantee basic due process rights in the Israeli military court system; respect the absolute prohibition against torture and ill-treatment in accordance with international law; and carry out its operations and procedures, from the moment of arrest, in accordance with international juvenile justice standards; and
- b) fully implement and enforce established law, including the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act, by monitoring and tracking gross human rights violations committed by Israeli armed forces and police and ensuring that the U.S. military and financial assistance is provided to the government of Israel in accordance with internationally recognized human rights standards;

To request that the “Peace Not Walls” campaign create a resource enabling congregations to learn more about the lives of Palestinian children and how Israel is spending U.S. military assistance to detain Palestinian children; and

To urge the presiding bishop and the bishops and staff of every ELCA synod to advocate with federal elected officials, encouraging them to:

- a) ensure that U.S. taxpayer funds not support military detention, interrogation, abuse or ill-treatment of Palestinian children, and
- b) support legislation, such as H.R. 2407 (116th Congress), that prohibits U.S. foreign aid to be used in ways that violate human rights for Palestinian children.

Category B3: Augusta Victoria Hospital

To request the presiding bishop, ELCA synods, and congregations to petition the U.S. president and all relevant legislators to release FY2018 funding intended

by Congress to support the East Jerusalem hospitals in FY2018, and continue funding at previous levels until the Israeli/Palestinian conflict is resolved;

To request the presiding bishop, ELCA synods, and congregations to petition the U.S. president and all applicable legislators to restore FY 2018 funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and beyond, and continue funding at previous levels until the Israeli/Palestinian conflict is resolved; and

To request the presiding bishop, ELCA synods, and congregations to petition the U.S. president and all relevant legislators to amend the Anti-Terrorism Clarification Act of 2018 in order to remove legislative barriers to future funding of humanitarian aid to the Palestinian Authority.

Category B4: Engagement in the Holy Land

To reaffirm that the ELCA, in its various expressions, continue to listen to the voices of persons holding various perspectives on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.