

1 This resolution has not yet been reviewed by the Committee of Reference. It has been received
2 by the Office of General Ministries under provisions of Standing Rule 12 of the Twenty-sixth
3 General Synod, allowing for the submission of Resolutions or Other Formal Motions up until
4 three weeks prior to the start of the General Synod, if the circumstances resulting in the drafting
5 of the resolution could not have been anticipated prior to Jan. 1, 2007. Receipt of this resolution
6 does not necessarily indicate it will be presented to the General Synod. The Committee of
7 Reference will meet to consider this resolution on June 20, 2007.

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10 **IN SUPPORT OF A RENEWED AND BALANCED STUDY AND RESPONSE**
11 **TO THE CONFLICT BETWEEN PALESTINE AND ISRAEL**

12 *(Type of resolution to be determined)*
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15 **SUBMITTED BY:**

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17 Don Niederfrank (Wisconsin Conference); Matt Braddock (Connecticut Conference); Mary
18 James, William Sawyer, John Tostenson (New Hampshire Conference); Tadd Allman-Morton
19 (Massachusetts Conference); James Darnell (Justice and Witness Ministries Board of Directors);
20 Brady Abel, James Mennerick (Missouri Mid-South Conference); Russ Kohrs (Central Atlantic
21 Conference); Rick Ashley and Rosa Smith-Williams (South Central Conference)
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23 **SUBMITTED ON:** June 1, 2007
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25 **SUMMARY:**
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27 This resolution calls upon the 26th General Synod of the United Church of Christ to:

- 28 • encourage all settings of the Church to engage in ongoing and balanced study of the
29 causes, history and context of the conflict between the Arab and Israeli people in the
30 Middle East,
- 31 • publicly condemn the use of the media, textbooks and other educational materials that
32 encourage children and young people to hate and destroy those with opposing
33 viewpoints,
- 34 • publicly condemn all ongoing and escalating violence that prevents a peaceful resolution
35 from being agreed upon and implemented, and
- 36 • establish a Task Force to study the complex situation in an in-depth and balanced
37 manner.
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39 **BACKGROUND:**
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41 The 25th General Synod of the United Church of Christ passed two resolutions in 2005
42 concerning the ongoing violence in the Middle East (“Tear Down the Wall” and “Concerning the
43 Use of Economic Leverage in Promoting Peace in the Middle East”). We continue to be
44 committed to assisting the Palestinian and Israeli people in finding a just two-state solution that
45 will ensure a secure, peaceful and productive future. Because the “Tear Down the Wall”

46 resolution focused solely on the actions of Israel, we also have a responsibility to more fully
47 understand and name the ways other nations and forces have contributed to the situation. Further
48 study of the causes and history of the conflict would bring forth a balanced response that holds
49 all parties accountable in appropriate ways, supports mutual understanding and dialog with
50 people of various perspectives, and contributes in a positive way to the wider community that is
51 committed to justice and peace in the Mideast.

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53 In recent months, we have seen a dramatic increase in violence in the Palestinian territories
54 bordering at times on civil war, including in the Gaza Strip, from which Israel completely
55 disengaged in 2005. This tragic violence reveals underlying tensions between the Palestinian
56 political groups of Hamas and Fatah that threaten the welfare of the Palestinian people and
57 diminish prospects of a viable Palestinian state. In the first five months of 2007, more than 200
58 Palestinians were killed and 1,065 injured as a result of internal fighting. Fifty-five of these
59 deaths occurred during the week of May 13 alone. The potential for Palestinian civil war has
60 never before been so real. If civil war comes to pass, it would be disastrous for everyone in the
61 region.

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63 As the possibility for a brighter future for Palestinians is diminished not only by actions of Israel
64 but also by violent internal battles being waged between Palestinian political parties and militias,
65 members of the United Church of Christ must develop a broader understanding of the violence
66 that plagues this part of the world. We cannot raise our voices only to point out the
67 transgressions of one side. Rather, when innocent lives are being shattered by an atmosphere of
68 intolerance, incitement and internal strife, we are called to an honest and searching critique of all
69 of the forces in conflict.

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71 Tensions between the two main Palestinian factions began surfacing following the murder of
72 three children of a senior Fatah officer in December 2006, and escalating internal Palestinian
73 violence and a turn towards possible civil war did not become apparent until well into the New
74 Year. Thus, the need for readdressing the situation based upon these new events which appear to
75 be independent of the conflict with Israel could not have been anticipated before the January 1,
76 2007, deadline for submitting resolutions to be considered at the 26th General Synod.

77 78 79 BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL RATIONALE:

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81 Jesus called his followers to work for peace. “Blessed are the peacemakers,” he said, “for they
82 will be called children of God” (Matthew 5:9). However, this call is not easily lived out.
83 Creating an environment fostering peace between longtime enemies requires disciplined
84 peacemakers with flexibility in the face of changing circumstances, compassion for suffering on
85 both sides, commitment to the possibility of reconciliation, and the ability to delve deeply into
86 complex issues with discernment and wisdom. The United Church of Christ is called to nothing
87 less than these ideals.

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89 The conflict between the Israelis and the people of Palestine and the Arab states – one that has
90 confounded many peacemakers in the past – is one of the most historically, politically,
91 economically, culturally, and religiously complex situations facing the modern world. Psalm
92 103:6 says, “The Lord works for vindication and justice for all who are oppressed.” As a
93 peacemaker, the Church in all of its settings must continue to speak out whenever violence,

94 hatred and oppression occur, standing in support of *all* who are oppressed and subjected to
95 injustice as new realities emerge. God commands it: “Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose
96 the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke to let the oppressed go free and to break
97 every yoke? (Isaiah 58:6).
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99 By continuing to humbly study, pray, discern and witness about the conflict in the Middle East,
100 the wider Church will be led to further truths: “For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth
101 come knowledge and understanding; he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to
102 those who walk blamelessly, guarding the paths of justice and preserving the way of his faithful
103 ones. Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path; for
104 wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; prudence will
105 watch over you; and understanding will guard you” (Proverbs 2:6-11).
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107 Finally, in our response to this situation and in our advocacy for peace, we are called to live out
108 the prayer displayed at St. George’s Cathedral in Jerusalem: “Let us pray not for Arab or Jew,
109 nor for Palestinian or Israeli, but let us pray rather for ourselves, that we may not divide them in
110 our prayers but keep them both together in our hearts. Amen.”
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113 RESOLUTION:

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115 WHEREAS, the 26th General Synod of the United Church of Christ continues to affirm the right
116 of the peoples of both Israel and Palestine to live in peace, side by side in two secure and
117 economically viable states; and
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119 WHEREAS, the 25th General Synod of the United Church of Christ passed two resolutions
120 focusing on the actions of Israel, entitled “Tear Down the Wall” and “Concerning the Use of
121 Economic Leverage in Promoting Peace in the Middle East,” and has yet to fully address other
122 forces contributing to the ongoing violence, oppression and suffering in the region; and
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124 WHEREAS, many children and young people are not being educated for peace but are being
125 exposed to hatred and intolerance in textbooks and the media; and
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127 WHEREAS, in recent months violence has dramatically escalated between the Palestinian
128 factions Fatah and Hamas, especially in the Gaza Strip, in spite of the fact that Israel disengaged
129 from Gaza in September 2005; and
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131 WHEREAS the potential for Palestinian civil war has never before been so real, and if it comes
132 to pass would be disastrous for everyone in the region; and
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134 WHEREAS, the escalating violence between Fatah and Hamas now calls us to consider whether
135 we may have overlooked many aspects of an extraordinarily complicated situation and
136 extraordinarily complicated relationships in the region; and
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138 WHEREAS, we reaffirm our call to act as peacemakers in this war-torn yet holy land;

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140 THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the 26th General Synod of the United Church of Christ
141 recognizes the need for ongoing balanced study, commentary and critique related to the conflict
142 in the region;

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144 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the 26th General Synod condemns all media programs,
145 publications, advertising campaigns, textbooks and groups that perpetuate violence instead of
146 promoting peace; and

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148 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the 26th General Synod directs the Executive Council to
149 establish a Task Force to engage in ongoing and balanced study of the causes, history and
150 context of the conflict, including appropriate responses to the situation that may or may not lead
151 to further support of economic leverage and removal of the security barrier. The Task Force is to
152 report to the 27th General Synod in 2009 for any necessary further action, and also to report to all
153 settings of the Church so that they, too, may have a deeper understanding of the situation.

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156 IMPLEMENTATION:

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158 The United Church of Christ Executive Council is requested to be the primary implementer of
159 this resolution.

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162 FUNDING:

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164 Funding for the implementation of this resolution will be made in accordance with the overall
165 mandates of affected agencies and the funds available.