

Title: Peace in Gaza and Israel

Primary Sponsor: Rev. Renata Eustis and Rev. Mark Brown

- Whereas,** the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)-adopted social statement *For Peace in God's World* recalls that “the basis of the Church’s peace-calling is in God’s final peace, the peace of God’s eternal reign. That calling is to proclaim the Gospel of God’s final peace and to work for earthly peace. This statement understands earthly peace to mean relationships among and within nations that are just, harmonious, and free from war. It offers direction as we act to keep and to build earthly peace . . . In recalling our identity in baptism, in gathering in peace around the Lord’s Table, in telling the biblical narrative, in teaching faith, hope, and love, the Church provides the basics of peacemaking for all of life. The Church is the school of the Holy Spirit, who molds and equips us to be peacemakers.”; and,
- Whereas,** *For Peace in God's World* reminds us that, "Through faithfulness in its life and activities as a community for peace, the Church in the power of the Holy Spirit becomes a presence for peace that disturbs, reconciles, serves, and deliberates."; and,
- Whereas,** the ELCA has addressed the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in numerous Churchwide actions over several decades, calling for a lasting peace based on justice, nonviolence, and the rule of law; and,
- Whereas,** the ELCA has strongly condemned the despicable terrorist attacks on October 7, 2023, by Hamas and has condemned the unprecedented and disproportionate death toll among Gazan civilians due to Israeli attacks;
- Whereas,** over 1,135 Israelis, over 30,000 Palestinians in Gaza (including over 12,000 children), and nearly 400 Palestinians in the West Bank have been killed since October 7, 2023; and,
- Whereas,** data from UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), World Health Organization (WHO), and the Palestinian government indicates that Israeli attacks have damaged more than half

of Gaza's homes - 360,000 residential units have been destroyed or damaged; 392 educational facilities; 11 out of 35 hospitals are partially functioning; 132 ground water wells damaged or destroyed; and 267 places of worship;

Whereas, 2.2 million people face "Crisis" or worse levels of food insecurity (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Phase 3 or above); and,

Whereas, Israel is blocking work visas for international aid workers in West Bank and Gaza, at least 94 journalists have been killed in Gaza since October 7, 2023, and attacks on protesters have been rising in Israel; and,

Whereas, the ELCA has expressed its sorrow over the loss of innocent lives on both sides and the need for the violence to stop and negotiations for an overall political solution to resume; therefore, be it

RESOLVED that the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod in assembly direct the synodical bishop to

1. send a letter to the President of the United States, Vice President, Secretary of State, the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, and all Members of Congress asking that they work with both the Israelis and Palestinians:
 - a. to secure an immediate and permanent ceasefire and the release of all hostages and unlawfully detained political prisoners,
 - b. to promote the resumption of efforts toward a political solution to the conflict,
 - c. to establish immediate and unhindered humanitarian access to all of Gaza,
 - d. to support the restoration of vital infrastructure in Gaza; and
 - e. to bring an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and a halt to all actions, by either party, that undermine Palestinian self-determination and a political solution to the conflict; and,
2. send a letter to all Members of Congress asking that they direct the US State Department to report to Congress on any arms shipments or assistance to Israel that may have been used in Gaza in violation

of international humanitarian law (Foreign Assistance Act 502b(c) authorizing Congressional oversight); and,

3. send a letter to the President of the United States, Vice President, and Secretary of State:
 - a. urging U.S. recognition of the State of Palestine,
 - b. urging that diplomatic pressure be placed on Israel in order to secure access to Augusta Victoria Hospital and other East Jerusalem hospitals for Gaza cancer patients and others needing urgent medical attention,
 - c. asking for continued funding for the East Jerusalem hospitals;
 - d. asking for reinstatement of full funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and
 - e. asking to hold accountable through the International Criminal Court and International Court of Justice those responsible for terrorist acts, taking hostages, and executing deliberate and disproportionate attacks on civilians; and, be it further

RESOLVED that members of synod congregations be encouraged to:

1. support through prayer those Palestinians and Israelis -- especially journalists, peace activists, medical personnel, and aid workers -- who work to create a future of justice, equality, reconciliation and peace for all Palestinians and Israelis;
2. support the ELCA Presiding Bishop's letters to the President and Congress with follow up letters and calls;
3. affirm the work of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, the Lutheran World Federation, and the Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel in bringing comfort, support, and relief to those who are suffering in Palestine and Israel and
4. be informed about and engaged in the SUMUD (formerly Peace Not Walls) initiative of the ELCA.