

Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine

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 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, inter-faith, 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 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 interfaith 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 for 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—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.