

# Middle East Network Newsletter

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August 22, 2011

## Churchwide Assembly Votes to Affirm ELCA Commitment to Justice in Palestine and Israel

The Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA, meeting in Orlando on August 18, voted to continue the ELCA's strong commitment to justice in Palestine and Israel. The Assembly decision demonstrates that the church has remained steadfast in its commitments, in keeping with the original strategy for engagement in Israel and Palestine adopted in 2005.

The action of the Assembly related to the Middle East – the full text of which is copied below – includes an official reception of the [Kairos Palestine document](#), the foundation of an initiative launched in December 2009 in Bethlehem by Palestinian Christians. Referencing [Bishop Hanson's statement](#) from the day the document was first unveiled, the Assembly called *Kairos Palestine*, “an ‘authentic word from our brothers and sisters in the Palestinian Christian community’ that ‘warrants our respect and attentiveness.’”

The vote for this action was overwhelmingly positive: 868 to 73. Important and affirming floor statements were made by several assembly members, including Bp. Richard Graham of the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod and Bp. Bruce Burnside, of the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin and chair of the bishops' Middle East Ready Bench.

This renewed mandate is an encouragement to ELCA members, congregations, and synods to redouble efforts among our network of committed volunteers throughout the church, as well as among staff in the churchwide offices, to raise awareness throughout the ELCA and to work for changes in U.S. policy that promote a just and lasting peace for our neighbors in the Middle East.

Rev. Robert O. Smith, Ph.D.  
ELCA Global Mission  
Area Program Director for the Middle East  
Coordinator, Peace Not Walls Campaign

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## Action of the ELCA Churchwide Assembly - Passed August 18, 2011

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.



**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

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