

Social Questions Bulletin

Seeking Global Justice through the United Methodist Church

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General Conference is Upon Us

In a way it's like Christmas. You know it's coming, but when you actually see how close it is on the calendar it's always something of a shock. General Conference (GC), the top policy-making body for the church, meets in Fort Worth, Texas in less than four months. We knew it was coming, but so soon?

In a very real way, MFSA never really stops preparing for this quadrennial event, but during these next four months we truly go into high gear.

MFSA has several priorities going in GC 2008 (see page 3). We will support or oppose many of the hundreds of pieces of legislation. It is usually the case, however, that at any given GC, a small number of issues rise to the top, either because of their importance or because of their controversial nature, usually both. This year will be no exception as, among other issues, the UMC deals with the question of how to promote peace in Israel/Palestine. MFSA believes that the UMC should take the step of selective divestment from companies that benefit from the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

We have chosen to focus this issue of the *Social Questions Bulletin* almost entirely on this one topic. As those who participate in and follow our work know, we are anything but a "one issue organization." Given our stance on divestment, however, and the fact that this stance is one that elicits strong response, we have chosen to provide more information than usual on one topic.

It is our hope and prayer, as well as our commitment, to join with other UM's as together we discern together how to take the most faithful action in working for peace and justice in relation Israel/Palestine. KJJ ❖

Divestment as a Nonviolent Tool for Peace

by Rev. Kathryn Johnson

One of the primary issues on the world stage, and of paramount importance to communities of faith, including the United Methodist Church, is how to bring about a just resolution to the wrenching conflict in Israel/Palestine. Certainly *peace within the region* depends on addressing the current injustices. Indeed, in many ways, *world peace* depends on doing so.

For many years, political leaders, peace activists, representatives of faith communities and regular citizens have endeavored to lend their weight to efforts to bring about peace. The UMC has been no exception. UMC leaders, agencies, caucuses and individuals have made statements, joined in delegations traveling to Israel/Palestine, conducted mission studies, developed action plans and engaged in advocacy related to Middle East peace.

At the upcoming General Conference this



Peace Pole near Galilee

issue of a just peace in the Middle East will come before us in a new way – one which raises the stakes. The Methodist Federation for Social Action (MFSA), a number of annual conferences, and perhaps some individuals have submitted resolutions to General Con-

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The Journey of a Child of Holocaust Survivors

by Dr. Sara Roy

Some months ago I was invited to reflect on my journey as a child of Holocaust survivors. This journey continues and shall continue until the day I die. Though I cannot possibly say everything, it seems especially poignant that I should be addressing this topic at a time when the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians is descending so tragically into a moral abyss and when, for me at least, the very essence of Judaism, of what it means to be a Jew, seems to be descending with it.

The Holocaust has been the defining feature

of my life. It could not have been otherwise. I lost over 100 members of my family and extended family in the Nazi ghettos and death camps in Poland—grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, a sibling not yet born—people about whom I have heard so much throughout my life, people I never knew. They lived in Poland in Jewish communities called shtetls.

In thinking about what I wanted to say about this journey, I tried to remember my very first conscious encounter with the Holocaust. Al-

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JOURNEY OF A CHILD continued from page one

though I cannot be certain, I think it was the first time I noticed the number the Nazis had imprinted on my father's arm. To his oppressors, my father, Abraham, had no name, no history, and no identity other than that blue-inked number, which I never wrote down. As a young child of four or five, I remember asking my father why he had that number on his arm. He answered that he had once painted it on but then found it would not wash off, so was left with it.

My father was one of six children, and he was the only one in his family to survive the Holocaust. I know very little about his family because he could not speak about them without breaking down. I know little about my paternal grandmother, after whom I am named, and even less about my father's sisters and brother. I know only their names. It caused me such pain to see him suffer with his memories that I stopped asking him to share them.

My father's name was recognized in Holocaust circles because he was one of two known survivors of the death camp at Chelmno, in Poland, where 350,000 Jews were murdered, among them the majority of my family on my father's and mother's sides. They were taken there and gassed to death in January 1942. Through my father's cousin I learned that there is now a plaque at the entrance to what is left of the Chelmno death camp with my father's name on it—something I hope one day to see. My father also survived the concentration camps at Auschwitz and Buchenwald and because of it was called to testify at the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem in 1961.

My mother, Taube, was one of nine children - seven girls and two boys. Her father, Herschel, was a rabbi and shohet (a ritual slaughterer) and deeply loved and respected by all who knew him. Herschel was a learned man who had studied with some of the great rabbis of Poland. The stories both my mother and aunt have told me also indicate that he was a feminist of sorts, getting down on his hands and knees to help his wife or daughters scrub the floor, treating the women in his life with the same respect and reverence he gave the men. My grandmother, Miriam, whose name I also have, was a kind and gentle soul but the disciplinarian of the family since Herschel could never raise his voice to his children. My mother came from a deeply reli-



*Dr. Sara Roy, senior research scholar
the the Center for Middle Eastern
Studies, Harvard University*

gious and loving family. My aunts and uncles were as devoted to their parents and they were to them. As a family they lived very modestly, but every Sabbath my grandfather would bring home a poor or homeless person who was seated at the head of the table to share the Sabbath meal.

My mother and her sister Frania were the only two in their family to survive the war. Everyone else perished, except for one other sister, Shoshana, who had emigrated to Palestine in 1936. My mother and Frania had managed to stay together throughout the war—seven years in the Pabianice and Lodz ghettos, followed by the Auschwitz and Halbstadt concentration camps. The only time in seven years they were separated was at Auschwitz. They were in a selection line, where Jews were lined up and their fate sealed by the Nazi doctor Joseph Mengele, who alone would determine who would live and who would die. When my aunt had approached him, Mengele sent her to the right, to labor (a temporary reprieve). When my mother approached him, he sent her to the left, to death, which meant she would be gassed. Miraculously, my mother managed to sneak back into the selection line, and when she approached Mengele again, he sent her to labor.

A defining moment in my life and journey as a child of Holocaust survivors occurred even before I was born. It involved decisions taken by my mother and her sister - two very remarkable women - that would change their lives and mine.

After the war ended, my aunt Frania desperately wanted to go to Palestine to join their sister, who had been there for ten years. The creation of a Jewish state was imminent, and Frania felt it was the only safe place for Jews

after the Holocaust. My mother disagreed and adamantly refused to go. She told me many times during my life that her decision not to live in Israel was based on a belief, learned and reinforced by her experiences during the war, that tolerance, compassion, and justice cannot be practiced or extended when one lives only among one's own. "I could not live as a Jew among Jews alone," she said. "For me, it wasn't possible and it wasn't what I wanted. I wanted to live as a Jew in a pluralist society, where my group remained important to me but where others were important to me, too."

Frانيا emigrated to Israel and my parents went to America. It was extremely painful for my mother to leave her sister, but she felt she had no alternative. (They have remained very close and have seen each other often, both in this country and in Israel.) I have always found my mother's choice and the context from which it emanated remarkable.

I grew up in a home where Judaism was defined and practiced not as a religion, but as a system of ethics and culture. God was present, but not central. My first language was Yiddish, which I still speak with my family. My home was filled with joy and optimism although punctuated at times by grief and loss. Israel and the notion of a Jewish homeland were very important to my parents. After all, the remnants of our family were there. But unlike many of their friends, my parents were not uncritical of Israel, insofar as they felt they could be. Obedience to a state was not an ultimate Jewish value, not for them, not after the Holocaust. Judaism provided the context for our life and for values and beliefs that were not dependent upon national boundaries, but transcended

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GENERAL CONFERENCE 2008 UPDATES

MFSA GC 2008 PRIORITIES

- manifesting God's hospitality to all persons;
- follow the example of Christ's nonviolent love;
- promoting racial and interfaith justice and reconciliation;
- demanding justice for those who are most vulnerable, particularly persons who are poor;
- working for a fully participatory church where all voices are heard;
- supporting peace in the Middle East;
- supporting sexuality education and the moral agency of women in reproductive health matters;
- protecting civil rights and civil liberties;
- protecting planet earth; and
- affirming the openness of our Wesleyan tradition.

LEGISLATION

Hundreds of pieces of legislation have been submitted to GC that relate to the priority concerns above. Within the next two months, MFSA will produce a number of analysis papers, or "Plumblines" which will be made available to delegates.

HOUSING

With thousands of delegates and visitors descending on Fort Worth for the ten days of General Conference hotel rooms will be in short supply. MFSA has reserved blocks of rooms on two hotels for Common Witness Coalition volunteers. If you do not already have a room confirmation, contact the following address ASAP:

mfsarooms@yahoo.com.

VOLUNTEERING

The **Common Witness Coalition** already has over 200 volunteers signed up to be present at GC. If you are interested in working with MFSA and/or other coalition groups and have not yet indicated your interest, please visit the MFSA website to find a volunteer form to send in - www.mfsaweb.org

VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION

Common Witness volunteers will gather late tuesday afternoon, April 23rd for an initial orientation. Details on time and place will be forthcoming.

COMMON WITNESS COALITION

Once again, MFSA has joined with other progressive United Methodist groups and individuals to work in coalition on issues of joint concern. Low-cost meals, hospitality space, opportunities for spiritual renewal, worship, communication and support will be made available to volunteers and delegates by the coalition. Our next *Social Questions Bulletin* will have many more details in this regard.

OFFICIAL GC SCHEDULE

Wednesday, April 23

Morning: Orientations for Heads of Delegations; Marshals and Pages; Delegates from outside the United States

Noon: Orientation for Women Delegates

Afternoon: Orientation for Delegates under 30; Racial and Ethnic Minority Del.

6:00 P.M. Opening Worship & Holy Communion – Preachers: Bishops Janice Riggle Huie & Gregory Vaughn Palmer

8:00 P.M. Organization of the General Conference - Setting the Bar of the Conference, Testing the Voting System, etc.

Thursday, April 24

8:00 A.M. Plenary Call to Order Morning Worship, Episcopal Address:

Bishop Sharon Brown Christopher

10:45 A.M. Plenary Call to Order Moving Forward – Connectional Table The Tools for Moving Forward – GCFA

11:35 A.M. First ever Young People's Address: "Many Voices, One Call"

2:30 P.M. Plenary Call to Order Laity Address: Lyn Powell "Disciples Transforming the World"

Call to Action

4:00 – 4:30 P.M.

Organization of Legislative Committees

4:30 – 7:45 P.M.

Training for Legislative Committee officers

8:00 – 11:00 P.M.

Legislative Committees

Basic Schedule for remainder of GC

8:15 A.M. Plenary Call to Order Morning Worship

9:05 A.M. Reports (as necessary)

Committees on Courtesies and Privileges, Calendar and Agenda, Presiding Officers

9:20 A.M. – 12:30 PM Plenary –

Calendar Items & Conference Business

Legislative Committee on 4/25 and 4/27

12:30 P.M. – 2:30 P.M. - Lunch

12:40 P.M. – 1:10 P.M. Communion

2:30 P.M. – 5:00 P.M.

Plenary – Conference Business

Legislative Committee on 4/25, 4/26, 4/27

5:00 P.M. – 7:30 P.M. Dinner Recess

7:30 P.M. – 11:00 P.M.

Plenary – Conference Business

Legislative Committee on 4/25, 4/26, 4/27

Friday, April 25

9:20 A.M. Greetings from the City of Fort Worth; Nominations for the University Senate and Judicial Council; Introduction of Affiliated Autonomous Methodist Church, Affiliated United Church, and Concordat Church Delegates

Saturday, April 26

9:20 A.M. Rural Life Celebration

10:45 A.M. Central Conference Pension Initiative; Task Force to Study the Episcopacy; General Conference Study Commission on the Relationship between the UMC and the Autonomous Methodist Churches in Latin America and the Caribbean

Sunday, April 27

9:20 A.M. Recognition of Retiring Bishops; Presentation of new Episcopal Leadership Team; Strengthening the Black Church Initiative; Celebration: 40th Anniversary of the dissolution of the Central Jurisdiction

2:30 P.M. – 4:30 P.M.

Legislative Committees

4:30 P.M. Dinner Recess

7:30 P.M. Area Night Program & Reception - *No Legislative Committees will meet Sunday evening*

Monday, April 28

9:20 A.M. Katrina Report

Elections: University Senate, Judicial Council, Commission on the General Conference, Secretary of the General Conference, Trustees of John Street Church, Inter-Jurisdictional Committee on the Episcopacy, General Council on Finance and Administration, other bodies to be elected

12:10 P.M. Celebration: 60th Anniversary of the Advance

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A Synopsis of the Israel/Palestine Conflict

by Dr. Virginia Lapham

The following is a very short synopsis of the history of this conflict. We recommend that you also read the much more detailed account, "The Origin of the Palestine-Israel Conflict" published by Jews for Justice in the Middle East. www.cactus48.com/truth.html

FOR 2,000 YEARS THERE WAS NO SUCH CONFLICT

The land of Palestine was inhabited by Palestinian Arabs. In 1850 these consisted of approximately 400,000 Muslims, 75,000 Christians, and 25,000 Jews. For centuries these groups had lived in harmony: 80 percent Muslim, 15 percent Christian, 5 percent Jewish.

ZIONISM

But then in the late 1800s a group in Europe decided to colonize this land. Known as "Zionists," this group consisted of an extremist minority of the world Jewish population. They wanted to create a Jewish homeland, and at first considered locations in Africa and South America, before finally settling on Palestine for their colony.

At first this immigration created no problems. However, as more and more Zionists immigrated to Palestine — many with the express wish of taking over the land for an exclusively Jewish state — the indigenous population became increasingly alarmed. Eventually, there was fighting between the two groups, with escalating waves of violence.

UN PARTITION PLAN

Finally, in 1947 the United Nations decided to intervene. However, rather than adhering to the democratic principle espoused decades earlier by Woodrow Wilson of "self-determination of peoples," in which the people themselves create their own state and system of government, the UN chose to revert to the medieval strategy whereby an outside power arbitrarily divides up other people's land.

Under considerable pressure from high-placed American Zionists, the UN decided to give away 55 percent of Palestine to a Jewish state — despite the fact that this group represented only about 30 percent of the total population, and owned under 7 percent of the land.



Gate into the Old City of Jerusalem

1948 WAR

When the inevitable war broke out the outcome was never in doubt, according to U.S. intelligence reports from the time. The Zionist army consisted of over 90,000 European-trained soldiers and possessed modern weaponry, including up-to-date fighter and bomber airplanes. The Arab forces, very much a third-world army, consisted of approximately 30,000 ill-equipped, poorly trained men. The U.S. Army, British intelligence, and the CIA all agreed: it would be no contest.

By the end of the 1948 war the Jewish state — having now declared itself "Israel" — had conquered 78 percent of Palestine — far more than that proposed even by the very generous UN partition plan. And three-quarters of a million Palestinians had been made refugees. Over 400 towns and villages had been destroyed, and a new map was being drawn up, in which every city, river and hill-ock would receive a new, Hebrew name. All vestiges of the Palestinian culture were to be erased. In fact, for many decades Israel — and the US, following its lead — denied the very existence of this population. Golda Meir once said, in fact: "There is no such thing as a Palestinian."

1967 WAR

In 1967, Israel conquered still more land. Following the Six Day War, in which Israeli

forces launched a highly successful, Pearl Harbor-like surprise attack on Egypt, Israel occupied the additional 22 percent of Palestine that had eluded it in 1948 — the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. It also occupied parts of Egypt (which since were returned) and Syria (which remain under occupation).

CURRENT CONFLICT

There are, then, two issues at the very core of the continuing conflict and escalating violence in the Middle East:

First, there is the inevitably destabilizing effect of trying to maintain an ethnically preferential state, particularly when the exclusionist entity is of largely colonial origin. As we have seen, the original population of what is now Israel was 95 percent Muslim and Christian. And yet, Muslim and Christian refugees are not being allowed to return to their homes in the current "Jewish state." Israeli peace negotiators refuse to even discuss the possibility of applying this UN guaranteed right.

Second, Israel's continued confiscation of Palestinian land in the West Bank and Gaza is being resisted by the Palestinian inhabitants. It is these occupied territories that, according to the Oslo peace accords of 1993, were going to become a Palestinian state. However, when Israel continued to take land in these areas and to move its citizens onto it, the Palestinian population rebelled. This uprising, called the "Intifada" (Arabic for "shaking off") began at the end of September 2000 and continues to this day. ❖



Palestinian Boy in Hebron

Realizing God's Dream for the Holy Land

By Archbishop Desmond Tutu

WHENEVER I am asked if I am optimistic about an end to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, I say that I am not. Optimism requires clear signs that things are changing - meaningful words and unambiguous actions that point to real progress. I do not yet hear enough meaningful words, nor do I yet see enough unambiguous deeds to justify optimism.

However, that does not mean I am without hope. I am a Christian. I am constrained by my faith to hope against hope, placing my trust in things as yet unseen. Hope persists in the face of evidence to the contrary, undeterred by setbacks and disappointment. Hoping against hope, then, I do believe that a resolution will be found. It will not be perfect, but it can be just; and if it is just, it will usher in a future of peace.

My hope for peace is not amorphous. It has a shape. It is not the shape of a particular political solution, although there are some political solutions that I believe to be more just than others.

Neither does my hope take the shape of a particular people, although I have pleaded tirelessly for international attention to be paid to the misery of Palestinians, and I have roundly condemned the injustices of certain Israeli policies that compound that misery. Thus I am often accused of siding with Palestinians against Israeli Jews, naively exonerating the one and unfairly demonizing the other.

Nevertheless, I insist that the hope in which I persist is not reducible to politics or identified with a people. It has a more encompassing shape. I like to call it "God's dream."

God has a dream for all his children. It is about a day when all people enjoy fundamental security and live free of fear. It is about a day when all people have a hospitable land in which to establish a future. More than anything else, God's dream is about a day when all people are accorded equal dignity because they are human beings. In God's beautiful dream, no other reason is required.

God's dream begins when we begin to know

each other differently, as bearers of a common humanity, not as statistics to be counted, problems to be solved, enemies to be vanquished or animals to be caged. God's dream begins the moment one adversary looks another in the eye and sees himself reflected there.

All things become possible when hearts fixed in mutual contempt begin to grasp a transforming truth; namely, that this person I fear and despise is not an alien, something less than human. This person is very much like me, and enjoys and suffers, loves and fears, wonders, worries, and hopes. Just as I do, this person longs for well-being in a world of peace.

God's dream begins with this mutual recognition - we are not strangers, we are kin. It culminates in the defeat of oppression perpetrated in the name of security, and of violence inflicted in the name of liberation. God's dream routs the cynicism and despair that once cleared the path for hate to have its cor-

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rosive way with us, and for ravenous violence to devour everything in sight.

God's dream comes to flower when everyone who claims to be wholly innocent relinquishes that illusion, when everyone who places absolute blame on another renounces that lie, and when differing stories are told at last as one shared story of human aspiration. God's dream ends in healing and reconciliation. Its finest fruit is human wholeness flourishing in a moral universe.

In the meanwhile, between the root of human solidarity and the fruit of human wholeness, there is the hard work of telling the truth.

From my experience in South Africa I know that truth-telling is hard. It has grave consequences for one's life and reputation. It stretches one's faith, tests one's capacity to love, and pushes hope to the limit. At times, the difficulty of this work can make you won-



Archbishop Desmond Tutu speaking at the Sabeel Conference in Boston

der if people are right about you, that you are a fool.

No one takes up this work on a do-gooder's whim. It is not a choice. One feels compelled into it. Neither is it work for a little while, but rather for a lifetime - and for more than a lifetime. It is a project bigger than any one life. This long view is a source of encouragement and perseverance. The knowledge that the work preceded us and will go on after us

is a fountain of deep gladness that no circumstance can alter.

Nothing, however, diminishes the fear and trembling that accompany speaking the truth to power in love.

An acute awareness of fallibility is a constant companion in this task, but because nothing is more important in the current situation than to speak as truthfully as one can, there can be no shrinking from testifying to what one sees and hears.

What do I see and hear in the Holy Land? Some people cannot move freely from one place to another. A wall separates them from their families and from their incomes. They cannot tend to their gardens at home or to their lessons at school. They are arbitrarily demeaned at checkpoints and unnecessarily beleaguered by capricious applications of bureaucratic red tape. I grieve for the damage being done daily to people's souls and bodies. I have to tell the truth: I am reminded of the yoke of oppression that was once our burden in South Africa.

I see and hear that ancient olive trees are up-

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Realities in Israel/Palestine

B'TSELEM, (www.btselem.org/English/Statistics/Index.asp), the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, maintains statistics on the following: Fatalities, Detainees and Prisoners, Destruction of Property, East Jerusalem, Separation Barrier, Settlements, Residency, Restrictions on Movement and Water. The following statistics reflect some of the current "on-the-ground" realities in Israel/Palestine.

FATALITIES

September 29, 2000 - November 30, 2007	Occupied Territories	Israel
Palestinians killed by Israeli security forces	4269	66
Palestinians killed by Israeli civilians	41	0
Israeli civilians killed by Palestinians	234	471
Israeli security force personnel killed by Palestinians	236	87
Foreign citizens killed by Palestinians	17	36
Foreign citizens killed by Israeli security forces	10	0
Palestinians killed by Palestinians	568	0

SEPARATION BARRIER

Note: all the data below relate to the barrier's effect following its completion in accordance with the route that the government approved on 30 April 2006.

Construction Progress

	Length (Km)	Percentage of barrier's length
Completed Construction	409	56.6
Under Construction	66	9.1
Construction not yet begun	248	34.3
Total	723	100

Source: OCHA: Office for the coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, November 2007

Palestinian population affected by the barrier's route

	# of Communities	# of Residents
Communities west of the barrier*	17	27,520
Communities east of the barrier that are completely or partially surrounded**	54	247,800
East Jerusalem	21	222,500
Total	92	497,820

*Residents of these towns and villages will require permits to live in their homes, and they will be able to leave their communities only via a gate in the barrier. The figure does not include three communities that are presently situated west of the barrier but lie east of the barrier according to the currently approved route.

**Residents of these towns and villages will not require permits or have to pass through a gate.

STATISTICS ON PUNITIVE HOUSE DEMOLITIONS

On 17 February 2005, the Minister of Defense announced a cessation of punitive house demolitions. From October 2001 (when house demolitions as punishment began again after a break of almost four years) to January 2005, Israel demolished 668 homes in the Occupied Territories as punishment.

Permanent checkpoints within the West Bank

Israel currently operates 87 permanent checkpoints deep within the West Bank (last counted on October 2007). 67 are staffed at all hours while 20 are staffed only during daytime or for part of the day. 14 of the around-the-clock checkpoints are inside the city of Hebron. Permanent checkpoints form the most severe restriction on movement in the West Bank. Palestinians who wish to cross them are subjected to checks and searches that often cause prolonged delays. At some checkpoints, soldiers bar all Palestinians from crossing except those who have special permits.

On April 2007, the IDF announced that as of May, it would cancel the restriction on Palestinians entering the Jordan Valley. In practice, however, there are still some checkpoints restricting entry into the area and others that allow only pedestrians to enter.

Checkpoints along the Green Line

34 permanent, staffed, around-the-clock checkpoints form the last control points between the West Bank and Israeli sovereign territory. Several of these checkpoints are located well within the West Bank, up to several kilometers from the Green Line.

Out of 87 gates in the Separation Barrier, only half serve Palestinians and these are only open during part of the day. Palestinians wishing to cross the Barrier at one of these gates must have a special permit.

Surprise [flying] checkpoints

These are temporary, staffed checkpoints that are set up for a few hours and then dismantled. OCHA reports that surprise checkpoints throughout the West Bank averaged at 69 a week in October 2007, as opposed to 141 a week in September.

Physical obstructions

In addition to staffed checkpoints, the IDF

has erected hundreds of physical obstacles to block roads and prevent movement between Palestinian communities. These obstacles include concrete blocks, dirt piles, trenches, and more. OCHA's count for October 2007 found:

- 67 roadside fences
- 28 trenches barring vehicles from crossing
- 84 locked entrance gates to villages, with keys held by the IDF
- 208 dirt piles blocking roads or entrances to villages

Source: OCHA, October 2007.

FORBIDDEN ROADS

24 sections of roads in the West Bank, totaling some 311 km, are restricted (or completely forbidden) to Palestinian traffic, while Israelis are allowed to travel on them freely.

Source: B'Tselem, August 2007. ❖

Guide to Terms

This glossary of terms was originally produced by the American Friends Service Committee and printed in 2004 study guide of When the Rain Returns: Towards Justice and Reconciliation in Palestine and Israel. MFSA has edited them slightly.

AL-AQSA MOSQUE - Third holiest shrine in the Muslim world, situated on the Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem.

ANTI-SEMITISM - Hostility toward Semites. Though Israelis and Palestinians are both semitic, the term almost always describes discrimination against Jews.

AREAS A, B, C - Areas into which the West Bank was divided in 1995 as part of the Oslo II negotiations. These areas create small ghetto-like enclaves for Palestinians on the West Bank isolated by Israeli settlements, wall, bypass roads, and road enclosures. They are sometimes called Bandustans, like the separate homeland for black South Africans set up by the South African Apartheid regime.

CHRISTIAN ZIONISM - Christian supporters of Israel whose support is based on a literal reading of the Book of Revelation that talks of the need for the ingathering of Jews before the Second Coming of Christ can occur.

DIASPORA - "Dispersion" in Greek - people living in exile from their country of origin. In Israeli usage the word refers to Jews outside

Israel. In Palestinian usage, it refers to Palestinians living in areas other than the West Bank, Gaza, and Israel.

DOMES OF THE ROCK – TEMPLE MOUNT

In Arabic the mosque erected in the seventh century on the spot where Muhammed ascended to Heaven during his Night Journey to Jerusalem. The Rock also refers to the spot where Abraham prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac. Some believe the Dome is also built on the site of the Jewish Temple and is the Temple Mount.

EAST BANK - The land east of the Jordan River that is a part of Jordan. Some Israeli settler groups refer to this same land as Eastern Israel.

EAST JERUSALEM - The Palestinian sector of Jerusalem; Israeli law was extended to East Jerusalem in 1982; Israel began to build the first "ring around Jerusalem" settlements shortly after the occupation in 1967. The inhabitants of East Jerusalem have overwhelmingly rejected Israeli citizenship, but have Jerusalem ID cards. **WEST JERUSALEM** - Refers to the new Jewish sector of Jerusalem built after the 1948 War.

FATAH - Palestinian National Liberation Movement, the largest group in the PLO; has evolved from a guerrilla to a political movement.

FOURTH GENEVA CONVENTION OF 1949 - Convention that provides for the protection of civilians in time of war. Israel has argued that this convention does not apply to the Occupied Territories since they were never part of a sovereign state with legal and political claims over the region.

GAZA STRIP - Rectangular region on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea between Israel and Egypt. It has a population of more than a million Palestinians and about seven thousand Israeli settlers in its 140 square-mile borders. In 2005, Israel withdrew about 7,000 Jewish settlers from Gaza, although Israel still retains control over the territory. Currently there is a major humanitarian crisis there with limited food and water. Some refer to this as a prison because Israel controls all entry and exists from the Gaza Strip.

GREATER JERUSALEM - An important term in Israel's current expansion of the borders of Jerusalem. When speaking of Jerusalem in 2004, one speaks of Municipal Jerusalem, the area after "annexation" by Israel in 1967, then of Greater Jerusalem, which includes an outer ring of settlements extend-

ing Jerusalem far into the West Bank, and finally a Metropolitan Jerusalem, which would extend beyond Ramallah in the north and Bethlehem in the south.

GREEN LINE - Armistice line of 1949 that separated Israel from the West Bank before 1967.

HA-KOTEL - "The wall" - Also known as the Western Wall or the Wailing Wall; a site holy to Jews since it is the western wall supporting Herod's Temple.

HAMAS - The Islamic Resistance Movement, tied to the Muslim Brotherhood, calling for the creation of an Islamic state in all of historic Palestine. Elected into the leadership of the Palestinian legislature in January 2006, Hamas has since shown signs of altering its stance to accept the state of Israel within its pre-1967 borders.

HEROD'S TEMPLE - Site of Jewish Temple destroyed in the First Century of the Common Era. It was thought to have been located somewhere on the Haram al-Sharif. Christian Zionists and some Israeli groups seek to rebuild this Temple, even if it involves the destruction of the Islamic mosques.

HEZBOLLAH - "Party of God" - Pro-Iranian Shi'ite party that is strong in Lebanon and has fought the Israeli army in Lebanon for many years.

HOLOCAUST - Genocide of European Jews by Nazi Germany in the 1930s and 40s; about six million Jewish men, women, and children were put to death in Nazi concentration camps.

INTIFADA - "Shaking off" in Arabic. The First Intifada took place in the Occupied Territories from 1987-1993 and was mainly a non-violent uprising against the Israeli Occupation of Palestinian Territory. The Second Intifada, also known as the Al-Aqsa Intifada, began in September of 2000 in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and initially consisted of tactics of civil disobedience similar to those in the First Intifada, but eventually involved much more violent resistance. According to the Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem, from September 29, 2000 until January 31, 2007, 1,020 Israelis and 4,325 Palestinians have been killed in fighting.

ISRAELI ARABS - Jewish Israeli term for those Palestinians who did not leave Palestine when the Jewish State was created in 1948. These Palestinians usually refer to

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Promoting Peace through Ethical Investment

The Methodist Federation for Social Action has submitted a resolution to General Conference calling for the General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits, as well as other United Methodist bodies, to undertake a process of phased, selective divestment from companies that support the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and other violations of human rights in Palestine/Israel. The rationale for our resolution follows as do the actions that are called for in the resolution:

Rationale:

- Resolution # 312 of the 2004 United Methodist *Book of Resolutions* affirms and supports Israel's right to exist within secure borders, the right of Palestinians to self-determination and the formation of a viable state, and a just solution for Palestinian refugees,
- There is an urgent and growing humanitarian crisis among the Palestinian people including lack of access to health care, extreme poverty, malnutrition, water shortages and the inability to farm agricultural lands,
- Resources that might be used for needed domestic programs in Israel are diverted instead to maintain the occupation of Palestine and the militarization of the Israeli society,
- According to the Israeli Human Rights group B'TSELEM 1 as of September 2007, 1,024 Israelis and 4,274 Palestinians have died since September of 2000.
- We acknowledge and lament the pain and suffering of both peoples and cannot, in sound Christian conscience, be silent in the face of that suffering.
- The destruction of Palestinian homes and confiscation of Palestinian land is made possible by the use of armored bulldozers, helicopter gunships, tanks and other equipment that may have been purchased from the U.S. corporations in which the United Methodist Church may hold investments,
- By a vote of 877 to 19, the General Conference in 2004 voted to resolve that, "The United Methodist Church opposes continued military occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, the confiscation of Palestinian land and water resources, the destruction of Palestinian homes, the continued building of illegal Jewish settlements, and any vision of a 'greater Israel' that includes the occupied territories and the whole of Jerusalem and its surroundings," (*Book of Resolutions, 2004, #312*).
- United Methodist policy "prohibits investment in enterprises that have policies or practices that are so morally reprehensible that investment in these companies is not tolerated by the church." [*Book of Resolutions, 2004, #213.1, "Avoidance by Divestment"*],
- The 2004 *Book of Discipline* states, "It shall be the policy of The United Methodist Church that all general boards and agencies, including the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits, and all administrative agencies and institutions, including hospitals, homes, educational institutions, annual conferences, foundations, and local churches, shall, in the investment of money...endeavor to avoid investments that appear likely, directly or indirectly, to support violation of human rights...The boards and agencies are to give careful consideration to shareholder advocacy, including advocacy of corporate disinvestment" (2004 *Book of Discipline*, ¶ 716),
- Many Annual conferences in the past three years have adopted resolutions calling for General Conference and the whole United Methodist Church to divest from companies that support and profit from ongoing Israeli military occupation of Palestinian land and other longstanding violations of human rights,
- The New England Annual Conference in June 2007, after two years of extensive research, published a list of 20 companies that it recommended for divestment,
- Divestment as a longstanding policy of The United Methodist Church and other ecumenical partners, constitutes a form of nonviolent, moral, economic means of seeking to change unjust corporate behavior – in this case, for ending all corporate support for Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories,
- Forty years of military occupation and the continued seizing of more and more land for illegal settlements, constitutes both justice delayed and justice denied to more than two generations of Palestinians.

Actions:

BE IT RESOLVED that the 2008 General Conference calls upon the UMC General Board of Pension and Health Benefits, and all general boards, administrative agencies and institutions, including hospitals, homes, educational institutions, annual conferences, foundations, and local churches to undertake the following process of phased, selective divestment from companies that support the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and other violations of human rights in Palestine/Israel:

- 1) review their investment portfolios and within six months identify a list of companies that are supporting the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories or that violate the human rights of Palestinians or Israelis, and to publish, maintain and distribute the list and constantly re-evaluate the relationship of companies to the occupation and human rights violations in the region, guided by Resolution #213, "Investment Ethics" (2004 United Methodist *Book of Resolutions*, p. 554-559),
- 2) before placing a company on the list, the Board of Pensions in cooperation with other general agencies should write to that company, explain our concerns as United Methodists, and request a change in the company's relationship to the Israeli occupation.
- 3) If no change in policy is reported within 60 days as being taken or contemplated, the company's name should be

General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits Statement

placed immediately on the divestment list along with explanatory details and shared with the whole church;

4) Once a company is placed on the list, no further stock shall be purchased until that company ends its activities that support the occupation; United Methodist general agencies and institutions should use currently held stock for shareholder actions and other forms of socially responsible action in keeping with the Investment Ethics policy, #213 in the 2004 *Book of Resolutions*. If a company continues to refuse to change its activities then after two years, all remaining stock shall be divested until such time as the company ends its support of Israel's occupation;

5) That the General Boards of Pensions & Health Benefits, Global Ministries, and Church & Society, work in cooperation with the World Council of Churches and other ecumenical and human rights partners to coordinate nonviolent, moral efforts to end all corporate support for occupation and human rights violations in Palestine/Israel;

Be it further resolved that The United Methodist Church at the same time supports positive investments that promote capacity building in partnership with poor and marginalized communities in Palestine/Israel, that fulfill the Call to Action in 2004 Resolution #206 "Economic Justice for a New Millennium" (#206, p. 538).

Be it further resolved that we ask every United Methodist to prayerfully consider taking the same action with the personal and pension assets under their control, and request that other investment managers such as mutual fund companies, pension plans, and bank trustees to the same.

Be it further resolved that we affirm our longstanding support of Christian presence in the Holy Land through forms of economic support and investment.

(Footnotes)

1 B'TSELEM: www.btselem.org Statistics from 9/29/2000 – 9/24/2007. ❖

Caring For Those Who Serve

The General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits (GBPHB) has written the following statement in response to calls for them to move toward selective divestment related to the conflict in Israel/Palestine.

ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

The conflict between Israel and Palestinians residing in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem is an issue of concern for several United Methodist Church annual conferences. Israeli settlement policies affecting Palestinian communities have led some conferences to raise the issue of divestment from companies operating in Israel or from companies providing any assistance to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands.

The General Board of Pension and Health Benefits of The United Methodist Church (General Board) is a socially responsible investor charged with investing in companies that... "make a positive contribution toward the realization of the goals outlined in the Social Principles.... Among the tools the General Board may use are shareholder advocacy, selective divestment, and advocacy of corporate disinvestment from certain countries or fields of business." (§1504.15, The Book of Discipline 2004)

The General Board seeks to align corporate behavior with the goals outlined in the Social Principles through persuasion, dialogue and shareholder resolutions.

GENERAL BOARD CONCERN FOR THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

Although the Church has not called for divestment, the General Board has been closely monitoring the Israeli-Palestinian investment situation. A letter-writing campaign that began in 2006 requests that companies identify the policies and practices that govern their Middle East business activities. The General Board also has retained the services of an investment research firm to identify and provide information on companies operating throughout the region. This information helps the General Board identify companies that have compromised United Methodist positions.

In meetings with representatives from other denominations, the General Board discusses corporate engagement issues and investigates opportunities for investment and microfinance lending to support the Palestinian economy. An ecumenical meeting involving representatives from several Protestant denominations took place in April 2007. The General Board also attended the "For the Peace of Jerusalem Conference" in May 2007, sponsored by the ecumenical organization, Churches for Middle East Peace.

The General Board also works with other UMC agencies and conferences on Israeli-Palestinian issues:

- In May 2005, the General Board and the General Board of Church and Society participated in an interfaith dialogue sponsored by the National Council of Churches.
- UMC general agency leaders and other mainline Christian and Jewish leaders traveled to Israel and Palestine to observe first-hand the conditions in affected communities. On return to the United States, the participants agreed to become effective advocates for a secure, viable and independent Palestinian state, alongside an equally secure State of Israel.
- The General Board continues consultation with the General Board of Church and Society and the General Board of Global Ministries on Israeli-Palestinian issues.

The General Board monitors the activities of Caterpillar, Inc., whose sale of equipment to Israel has raised concerns among socially responsible and faith-based investors. Following a traditional shareholder advocacy strategy, the General Board supported a shareholder resolution at the Caterpillar 2005 Annual Meeting, requesting a report of equipment sales to the Israeli Defense Forces. The General Board plays a leading role in ongoing dialogue with Caterpillar officials, which has resulted in the implementation of

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RESOURCES

APPLIED RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF JERUSALEM (ARIJ) - Palestinian institute devoted to monitoring Israel 's settlement activity and expropriation of the natural resources of the West Bank and Gaza. Website: www.arj.org

PARENTS CIRCLE-FAMILIES FORUM - Group of Palestinian and Israeli families who share the loss of children killed in the conflict and who work for coexistence and peace. Website: www.theparentscircle.org

B'TSELEM - Israeli information center for human rights in the occupied territories, founded in 1989. Website: www.btselem.org/English

CHRISTIAN PEACEMAKER TEAMS (CPT) - was created by the Mennonites, Quakers, and Church of the Brethren to provide a non-violent alternative to war and other forms of lethal inter-group conflict. CPT sends delegations to various parts of the world and has established a permanent presence in Hebron. Website: www.cpt.org

CHURCHES FOR A MIDDLE EAST PEACE (CMEP) - Washington-based representatives of Christian churches supporting a nonviolent resolution of the Israel/Palestine conflict, with special attention paid to indigenous Palestinian Christians. Website: www.cmep.org

COMBATANTS FOR PEACE- a group of Israeli and Palestinian individuals formerly involved in the cycle of who commit to use only non-violent means to achieve our goals of peace and liberation and call for both societies to end violence. Website: www.combatantsforpeace.org

COURAGE TO REFUSE - Contemporary Israeli peace organization for women and men who refuse army service on the West Bank and Gaza.. Website: www.seruv.org.il/english/default.asp

GENERAL BOARD OF CHURCH AND SOCIETY- United Methodist agency responsible for providing resources for United Methodist

clergy and laity to take action on issues of justice from a faith perspective. For information about work and actions related to Israel and Palestine visit: www.umcgbcs.org

GENERAL BOARD OF GLOBAL MINISTRIES-United Methodist agency largely responsible for United Methodist Mission personnel, education, relationships and outreach. For information about work and actions related to Israel and Palestine visit the website: <http://new.gbmg-umc.org/news/themes/middleeast>

IF AMERICANS KNEW- The mission of If Americans Knew is to inform and educate the American public on issues of major significance that are unreported, underreported, or misreported in the American media. Website: www.ifamericansknew.org

ISRAEL/PALESTINIAN CENTER FOR RESEARCH AND INFORMATION (IPCRI) - A joint Israeli/Palestinian organization that researches and writes about relevant topics related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, organizes conferences and seminars on these topics, and publishes the findings. Website: www.ipcri.org

ISRAELI COMMITTEE AGAINST HOUSE DEMOLITIONS (ICHAD) - An Israeli non-violent peace group that works in partnership with Palestinians to change the Israeli government's policy and practice of house demolitions in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Website: www.icahd.org/eng

JEWISH VOICE FOR PEACE- Through grassroots organizing, education, advocacy, and media, Jewish Voice for Peace works to achieve a lasting peace that recognizes the rights of both Israelis and Palestinians for security and self-determination. Website: www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org

PALESTINIAN CENTER FOR RAPPROCHEMENT BETWEEN PEOPLE- Peace center in Beit Sahour near Bethlehem that has sought to foster dialogue and understanding between Palestinians and Israelis since the first Intifada. Website: www.pcr.ps

PEACE NOW - Umbrella Israeli peace organization, united by the desire of its members for territorial compromise; organizes large rallies and demonstrations within Israel. Website: www.peacenow.org

RABBIS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS - An Israeli-based peace group of more than eighty rabbis, that works for human rights for all citizens of Israel and Palestine. Website: rhr.israel.net (no "www")

SABEEL - meaning "The way" or "A spring" - A Palestinian liberation theology center that seeks to contextualize the Palestinian Christian experience within its political and social context. Sabeel works with other Palestinian and Israeli organizations for a just and non-violent resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Website: www.sabeel.org

SHARING JERUSALEM- Sharing Jerusalem is a grass-roots campaign that was launched in the Washington DC metro area in the spring of 2006 to educate, organize, and activate mainline churches in support of a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict - specifically, a two-state solution that would include a Jerusalem that is "shared" both politically between Israel and Palestine and religiously among Jews, Muslims, and Christians. Website: www.sharingjerusalem.org

UNITED METHODIST WOMEN- United Methodist groups that works to raise awareness of the concerns and responsibilities of the Church in the world, with special attention to the needs of women and children. For more information about work and action related to Palestine and Israel visit the website: <http://new.gbmg-umc.org/umw>. ❖



Israel and Palestine flags with "Peace" in Hebrew and Arabic

GUIDE TO TERMS continued from page 7

themselves as Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel.

ISRAELI DEFENSE FORCES (IDF) - The Israeli armed forces, perhaps the fourth-strongest in the world.

KIBBUTZ (plural: kibbutzim) - An Israeli collective farm. Once important in the development of Israel, they now represent less than two percent of the population.

KNESSET - Single-chamber Israeli parliament of 120 members, elected for four years.

LAW OF RETURN - A law passed in Israel in 1950 allowing Jews anywhere to become an Israeli citizen. Does not apply to Palestinian refugees seeking to return to the homes they left in 1948 and 1967.

LIKUD - Right-wing Israeli coalition that has been in power, with a few exceptions, since 1977; advocates an autonomy plan for Palestinians that would give Palestinians control over social aspects of their society but not over the land and security.

NAKBA - Arabic for "The Catastrophe." The term Palestinians use to refer to the dispossession of Palestinian lands and property in historic Palestine during and following the creation of the state of Israel and the 1948 Israeli-Arab war. Palestinians also use the term to mark the beginning of the Palestinian refugee crisis.

OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES (OPT) - The Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, occupied by Israel since 1967. The Golan Heights is Syrian land occupied in 1967.

OLD CITY - The walled city of Jerusalem, historically divided into four quarters-Muslim, Jewish, Christian, and Armenian.

ORTHODOX JEWS - Members of the established and most traditional branch of Judaism; they maintain a strict interpretation of Jewish law and customs.

OSLO - Refers to the Oslo Accords, crafted by Israeli and Palestinian negotiators in Oslo and ratified at the White House in Washington, D.C. in 1993. Oslo was meant to be negotiated in stages, with prisoners, economy, Palestinian sea and air ports, and security issues taking precedence, and "final status" issues negotiated last, including Jerusalem, state borders, refugees, and settlements. The process failed, instead increasing violence in

the region and eventually leading to the Second Intifada.

PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION (PLO) - Established in 1964 to represent stateless Palestinians, it evolved into a government-in-exile and remains as a parallel to the Palestinian Authority.

PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY (PA) - Palestinian governing body ruling in Areas A and B in the West Bank and Gaza.

PARTITION PLAN - Reference to the United Nations Resolution of November 29, 1947, dividing Mandate Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state.

QUR'AN - The Holy Book of Islam, the word of God as received by Muhammed.

RIGHT OF RETURN - An individual right granted all Palestinian refugees in U.N. Resolution 194. Whether the Palestinians have this right is contested by most Israelis and therefore this issue remains one of the most difficult of "final status" issues.

ROADMAP FOR PEACE - This is a plan embraced by the Quartet for the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It consists of three phases: 1. Immediate Palestinian Authority security actions and the dismantling of Israeli settlement outposts erected since March 2001, 2. the establishment of a Palestinian State, and 3. negotiations for a final peace.

SETTLEMENTS - Illegal Jewish neighborhoods built by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian West Bank Territory. This is one of the issues which is consistently disputed in peace processes and negotiations. There are 242 settlements in the West Bank and 29 in East Jerusalem. Israel has also recently announced plans for building a new settlement.

SHI'ITE MUSLIMS - Members of the second-largest branch of Islam; Shi'ite sects believe that Ali, Muhammed's direct descendant, was his only rightful successor.

SUNNI MUSLIMS - Members of the largest branch of Islam in the Middle East; Sunni sects are orthodox, believing that the first four caliphs were Muhammed's rightful successors.

WEST BANK - Large irregularly-shaped territory between the Jordan River and Israel's 1949 armistice border. About 3350 square miles (5400 square kilometers). It contains the parts of Jerusalem east of the 1948-49 armistice line. Jordan annexed the West Bank after the 1948 war; the West Bank has been occupied by Israel since 1967.

ZIONISM - There are many "Zionisms"-religious, political, and cultural-all of which have in common the desire to see Jews from around the world settled permanently in a homeland in Palestine, the historical land of Israel. Religious Zionists believe that the gathering together of world Jewry into the land of Israel will fulfill biblical prophecy and bring on the millennium. Political Zionists seek to build a nation state for the Jewish people, and cultural Zionists seek to strengthen Jewish cultural identity within their historic homeland. ❖

GENERAL CONFERENCE SCHEDULE continued from page 3

Tuesday, April 29

9:20 A.M. Ecumenical Guests

12:10 P.M.

Celebration: 40th Anniversary of the Gen Comm on Religion and Race

2:30 P.M. Address: Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President, Republic of Liberia

Wednesday, April 30

9:20 A.M. Africa University Report

12:10 P.M.

Celebration: 100th Anniversary of the United Methodist Men

Thursday, May 1

9:20 A.M.

Recognition of retiring Judicial Council Members and Introduction of new Judicial Council Members

12:10 P.M.

Celebration: 100th Anniversary of the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits

Friday, May 2

9:20 A.M. GCFA Report

12:10 P.M. Celebration: 100th Anniversary of the Social Principles

End of Business

Recognitions

Closing Worship

Final Adjournment ❖

DIVESTMENT continued from page one

ference calling on the church to undertake a process of phased, selective divestment from companies that support the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and other violations of human rights in Palestine/Israel.

Divestment is serious business. Calls for such are not made lightly and should not be taken lightly. Neither, however, should we shy away from using this powerful nonviolent tool of bringing economic pressure to bear on a situation that has proven intractable to other forms of influence. Many, including MFSA, believe that now is such a time in the conflict in Israel/Palestine.

Watching the dialogue develop around this issue, it occurs to me that the way things are being framed is "off center." The conversation, or in many cases debate, tends to focus on whether the General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits (GBPHB) is doing what it should in relation to Israel-Palestine.

It seems to me that the GBPHB is doing pretty much what the church has instructed them to do. Following UMC guidelines for ethical investing, and responding to statements of concern and resolutions of the church expressing opposition to the Israeli occupation of Palestine, the GBPHB has included these concerns in their interactions with companies in the region, using the tools of dialogue and shareholder resolutions. At the same time they have looked for opportunities to support the Palestinian economy.

Although selective divestment is one of the tools in their "socially responsible investing" tool box, and many of us including MFSA have urged them to use it, they have chosen not to do so thus far.

We shouldn't be surprised that the GBPHB is moving cautiously. We have entrusted them with enormous resources and with the responsibility of using those resources to care for the pensions and health care needs of huge numbers of clergy and lay employees of the church.

It is not the GBPHB that needs to take a bold step at this point. **It is the UMC that needs to take a bold step and General Conference 2008 affords us the opportunity to do just that.** It is time for us to be explicit in our instructions to the GBPHB.

The GBPHB follows the mandates of the church. The mandates of the church issue forth from General Conference. We depend



A 50-ton Caterpillar D9T bulldozer. This and similar Caterpillar models are sold to the Israeli government and used to demolish Palestinian homes.

upon the GBPHB to provide information, to interpret the policies of the church and to concretize general statements by taking specific actions.

The church as a whole must take the bold step of acknowledging that our efforts to date have not been sufficient, that the suffering and injustices are intolerable and that it is time to take stronger action.

The GBPHB cannot be expected to take this step without a strong and clear mandate from the church. It is up to us to make sure such a mandate is issued in Fort Worth in April. It is the church as a whole which must say to the GBPHB, it is time to move to selective divestment, not because *you have determined* that this is the best course of action, but because *the whole church has determined* that this is the most faithful response to the realities of the day.

There will be enormous pressure to back away from taking this stance. Those who support selective divestment will be accused of being anti-Semitic. Pleas will be made to consider inter-faith relations. We will be reminded that membership in the UMC is in decline and that controversies such as this will lead to even more persons leaving, or not joining, the church. We will be cautioned that it is irresponsible to take risks with United Methodist investments. The numbers of retired clergy and lay employees is growing and it is the responsibility of the church to provide financial security for those who have served so faithfully. We must face these pressures head on.

Anti-Semitism is alive and well in the world. We must always be willing to reflect on our attitudes and actions and recognize and re-

pent of our own anti-Semitism when it raises its ugly head. To use the power of corporate engagement and selective divestment to put pressure on the US and Israeli governments, however, is not inherently anti-Semitic. To the contrary, it can be a powerful nonviolent tool to change unjust policies that lead to massive suffering and human rights violations in Palestine.

Likewise, our commitment to interfaith relationships must remain strong and steady. To the extent that relationships with Jewish partners are strained by actions of selective divestment - and they will be - we must redouble our efforts to be in dialogue, to listen and to understand the positions of our Jewish friends and to share our own convictions in ways that are clear and compassionate.

At the same time we must remember that inter-faith relationships include our connections to groups of other faiths, most especially in this case with Muslims. No doors should be closed, as far as we are able to control the situation, with any of our faith partners. Opportunities to recognize places where doors are opened should be taken.

Regarding the decline in membership in the UMC, I would venture to say that the vitality of church does not, and should not, depend on shying away from the vital social issues of the day. Indeed, should we do so, we would cease to be a church in the Wesleyan tradition.

When it comes to stewardship of the resources in the UM pension fund, certainly the church must invest wisely so that those who have served the church faithfully will have resources upon which to live in retirement. Investing our funds in ways that are consistent with our values and social stands has never endangered the health of our investments and there is no indication that selective divestment in companies that benefit from the occupation of Palestine would threaten the health of these funds moving into the future.

The fact that acting to use selective divestment as a tool for social change is controversial must not stop us from discerning together as United Methodist Christians whether this is what we are called to do.

Clearly we are called always to live our faith, to put our beliefs into action. We look forward to continued dialogue over these next weeks as the church discerns whether selective divestment is, indeed, the action we, as a church, are being called to implement. ❖

CARING FOR THOSE WHO SERVE continued from page 9

the Caterpillar “Code of Worldwide Business Conduct” and the publication of 2006 and 2007 sustainability reports.

General Board Position

The General Board advocates for peace in the Middle East using a variety of socially responsible investing tools—letter-writing, proxy voting, shareholder resolutions, corporate dialogue—providing flexibility to engage corporations directly and constructively. Divestment, on the other hand, precludes any efforts to work for change within existing corporate structures. The General Board views divestment as a policy of last resort—useful only when all other avenues of influence have been exhausted.

By working closely with other faith-based groups and other socially responsible investors, and by using traditional shareholder advocacy tools, the General Board encourages corporations operating in the Middle East to use their business presence and resources to influence the transformation of this troubled region.

Social Justice Advocacy As the denomination’s primary statement on contemporary social, political and economic issues, the Social Principles and the more detailed Book of Resolutions provide the foundation for the General Board’s social justice advocacy.

Shareholder advocacy activities (letter-writing, proxy voting, shareholder resolutions and corporate dialogue) are effective in changing corporate policy and behavior:

- In April 2007, McDonald’s Corporation reached an agreement with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) to increase the wages of tomato harvesters in Florida and to cooperate with CIW to develop a new code of conduct for Florida tomato growers. The General Board, along with other socially responsible investors, was instrumental in getting McDonald’s and the CIW to the bargaining table.
- Abbott Laboratories, Inc. announced a significant price reduction for an important AIDS medication to be distributed in more than 40 under-developed countries. The General Board has been advocating for affordable HIV/AIDS medications for many years and has been in discussions with Abbott since 1999.
- In response to General Board shareholder activity and ongoing dialogue, Wal-Mart is-

sued a “vendor code of conduct” guaranteeing that the retailer’s worldwide manufacturing workers are treated fairly and humanely—Wal-Mart will publish its first sustainability report in 2007.

The General Board believes socially responsible investing makes a difference throughout the world and continues to look for ways to bring hope and resolution to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

About the General Board

The General Board of Pension and Health Benefits is a not-for-profit administrative agency of The United Methodist Church, responsible for the general supervision and administration of the retirement, health and welfare benefit plans, programs and funds for more than 74,000 clergy and lay employees of the Church.

With more than \$16 billion in assets under management, the General Board is the largest faith-based pension fund in the United States and ranks among the top 100 pension funds in the country. As a socially responsible investor, the General Board is actively involved in shareholder advocacy, proxy voting, portfolio screening and community investing.

GBPHB
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www.gbophb.org ❖

REALIZING GOD'S DREAM continued from page 5

rooted. Flocks are cut off from their pastures and shepherds. The homes of some people are bulldozed even as new homes for others are illegally constructed on other people’s land. I grieve for the land that suffers such violence, the marring of its beauty, and the loss of its comforts, the despoiling of its yield. I have to tell the truth: I am reminded of the bitter days of uprooting and despoiling in my own country.

I see and hear that young people believe that it is heroic and pious to kill others by killing themselves. They strap bombs to their torsos to achieve liberation. They do not know that liberation achieved by brutality will defraud in the end. I grieve the waste of their lives and of the lives they take, the loss of personal and communal security they cause, and

the lust for revenge that follows their crimes, crowding out all reason and restraint. I have to tell the truth: I am reminded of the explosive anger that inflamed South Africa, too.

Some people are enraged by comparisons between the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and what happened in South Africa. There are differences between the two situations, but a comparison need not be exact in every feature to yield clarity about what is going on. Moreover, for those of us who lived through the dehumanizing horrors of the apartheid era, the comparison seems not only apt, it is also necessary. It is necessary if we are to persevere in our hope that things can change.

Indeed, because of what I experienced in South Africa, I harbor a vast, unreasoning hope for Israel and the Palestinian territories. South Africans, after all, had no reason to suppose that the evil system and the cycles of violence that were sapping the soul of our nation would ever change. There was nothing special or different about South Africans to deserve the appearance of the very thing for which we prayed and worked and suffered so long.

Most South Africans did not believe they would live to see a day of liberation. They did not believe that their children’s children would see it. They did not believe that such a day even existed, except in fantasy. But we have seen it. We are living now in the day we longed for.

It is not a cloudless day. The divine arc that bends toward a truly just and whole society has not yet stretched fully across my country’s sky like a rainbow of peace. It is not finished, it does not always live up to its promise, it is not perfect - but it is new. A brand new thing, like a dream of God, has come about to replace the old story of mutual hatred and oppression.

I have seen it and heard it, and so to this truth, too, I am compelled to testify - if it can happen in South Africa, it can happen with the Israelis and Palestinians. There is not much reason to be optimistic, but there is every reason to hope. ❖

Desmond Tutu is the former archbishop of Cape Town, chairman of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and a Nobel Peace Prize laureate.

JOURNEY OF A CHILD continued from page two

them. For my mother and father, Judaism meant bearing witness, railing against injustice and foregoing silence. It meant compassion, tolerance, and rescue. It meant, as Ammiel Alcalay has written, ensuring to the extent possible that the memories of the past do not become the memories of the future. These were the ultimate Jewish values. My parents were not saints; they had their faults and they made mistakes. But they cared profoundly about issues of justice and fairness, and they cared profoundly about people—all people, not just their own.

The lessons of the Holocaust were always presented to me as both particular (i.e., Jewish) and universal. Perhaps most importantly, they were presented as indivisible. To divide them would diminish the meaning of both.

Looking back over my life, I realize that through their actions and words, my mother and father never tried to shield me from self-knowledge; instead, they insisted that I confront what I did not know or understand. Noam Chomsky speaks of the “parameters of thinkable thought.” My mother and father constantly pushed those parameters as far as they could, which was not far enough for me, but they taught me how to push them and the importance of doing so.

It was perhaps inevitable that I would follow a path that would lead me to the Arab-Israeli issue. I visited Israel many times while growing up. As a child, I found it a beautiful, romantic, and peaceful place. As a teenager and young adult I began to feel certain contradictions that I could not fully explain, but which centered on what seemed to be the almost complete absence in Israeli life and discourse of Jewish life in Eastern Europe before the Holocaust, and even of the Holocaust itself. I would ask my aunt why these subjects were not discussed, and why Israelis didn’t learn to speak Yiddish. My questions were often met with grim silence.

Most painful to me was the denigration of the Holocaust and pre-state Jewish life by many of my Israeli friends. For them, those were times of shame, when Jews were weak and passive, inferior and unworthy, deserving not of our respect but of our disdain. “We will never allow ourselves to be slaugh-

tered again or go so willingly to our slaughter,” they would say. There was little need to understand those millions who perished or the lives they lived. There was even less need to honor them. Yet at the same time, the Holocaust was used by the state as a defense against others, as a justification for political and military acts.

I could not comprehend nor make sense of what I was hearing. I remember fearing for my aunt. In my confusion, I also remember profound anger. It was at that moment, perhaps, that I began thinking about the Palestinians and their conflict with the Jews. If so many among us could negate our own and so pervert the truth, why not with the Palestinians? Was there a link of some sort between the murdered Jews of Europe and the Palestinians? I did not know, but so my search began.

It is perhaps in the concept of home and shelter that I find the most profound link between the Jews and the Palestinians, and perhaps, the most painful illustration of the meaning of occupation.

The journey has been a painful one, but among the most meaningful of my life. At my side, always, was my mother, constant in her support, although ambivalent and conflicted at times. My father had died a young man. I do not know what he would have thought, but I have always felt his presence. My Israeli family opposed what I was doing and has always remained steadfast in their opposition. In fact, I have not spoken with them about my work in over fifteen years.

Despite many visits to Israel during my youth, I first went to the West Bank and Gaza in the summer of 1985, two and a half years before the first Palestinian uprising, to conduct fieldwork for my doctoral dissertation, which examined American economic assistance to the West Bank and Gaza Strip. My research focused on whether it was possible to promote economic development under conditions of military occupation. That summer changed my life because it was then that I came to understand and experience what occupation was and what it meant. I learned how occupation works, its impact on the economy, on daily life, and its grinding impact on people. I learned what it meant to have little control over one’s life and, more importantly, over the lives of one’s children.

As with the Holocaust, I tried to remember my very first encounter with the occupation. One of my earliest encounters involved a group of Israeli soldiers, an old Palestinian man, and his donkey. Standing on a street with some Palestinian friends, I noticed an elderly Palestinian walking down the street, leading his donkey. A small child no more than three or four years old, clearly his grandson, was with him. Some Israeli soldiers standing nearby went up to the old man and stopped him. One soldier ambled over to the donkey and pried open its mouth. “Old man,” he asked, “why are your donkey’s teeth so yellow? Why aren’t they white? Don’t you brush your donkey’s teeth?” The old Palestinian was mortified, the little boy visibly upset. The soldier repeated his question, yelling this time, while the other soldiers laughed. The child began to cry and the old man just stood there silently, humiliated.

This scene repeated itself while a crowd gathered. The soldier then ordered the old man to stand behind the donkey and demanded that he kiss the animal’s behind. At first, the old man refused but as the soldier screamed at him and his grandson became hysterical, he bent down and did it. The soldiers laughed and walked away. They had achieved their goal: to humiliate him and those around him. We all stood there in silence, ashamed to look at each other, hearing nothing but the uncontrollable sobs of the little boy. The old man did not move for what seemed a very long time. He just stood there, demeaned and destroyed.

I stood there too, in stunned disbelief. I immediately thought of the stories my parents had told me of how Jews had been treated by the Nazis in the 1930s, before the ghettos and death camps, of how Jews would be forced to clean sidewalks with toothbrushes and have their beards cut off in public. What happened to the old man was absolutely equivalent in principle, intent, and impact: to humiliate and dehumanize. In this instance, there was no difference between the German soldier and the Israeli one. Throughout that summer of 1985, I saw similar incidents: young Palestinian men being forced by Israeli soldiers to bark like dogs on their hands and knees or dance in the streets.

In this critical respect, my first encounter with the occupation was the same as my first en-

continued on next page

counter with the Holocaust, with the number on my father's arm. It spoke the same message: the denial of one's humanity. It is important to understand the very real differences in volume, scale, and horror between the Holocaust and the occupation and to be careful about comparing the two, but it is also important to recognize parallels where they do exist.

As a child of Holocaust survivors, I always wanted to be able in some way to experience and feel some aspect of what my parents endured, which, of course, was impossible. I listened to their stories, always wanting more, and shared their tears. I often would ask myself, what does sheer terror feel like? What does it look like? What does it mean to lose one's whole family so horrifically and so immediately, or to have an entire way of life extinguished so irrevocably? I would try to imagine myself in their place, but it was impossible. It was beyond my reach, too unfathomable.

It was not until I lived with Palestinians under occupation that I found at least part of the answers to some of these questions. I was not searching for the answers; they were thrust upon me. I learned, for example, what sheer terror looked like from my friend Rabia, eighteen years old, who, frozen by fear and uncontrollable shaking, stood glued in the middle of a room we shared in a refugee camp, unable to move, while Israeli soldiers were trying to break down the front door to our shelter. I experienced terror while watching Israeli soldiers beat a pregnant woman in her belly because she flashed a V-sign at them, and I was too paralyzed by fear to help her. I could more concretely understand the meaning of loss and displacement when I watched grown men sob and women scream as Israeli army bulldozers destroyed their home and everything in it because they built their house without a permit, which the Israeli authorities had refused to give them.

It is perhaps in the concept of home and shelter that I find the most profound link between the Jews and the Palestinians, and perhaps, the most painful illustration of the meaning of occupation. I cannot begin to describe how horrible and obscene it is to watch the deliberate destruction of a family's home while that family watches, powerless to stop it. For Jews as for Palestinians, a house represents far more than a roof over one's head; it represents life itself. Speaking about the demolition of Palestinian homes, Meron

Benvenisti, an Israeli historian and scholar, writes:

"It would be hard to overstate the symbolic value of a house to an individual for whom the culture of wandering and of becoming rooted to the land is so deeply engrained in tradition, for an individual whose national mythos is based on the tragedy of being uprooted from a stolen homeland. The arrival of a firstborn son and the building of a home are the central events in such an individual's life because they symbolize continuity in time and physical space. And with the demolition of the individual's home comes the destruction of the world."

Israel's occupation of the Palestinians is the crux of the problem between the two peoples, and it will remain so until it ends. For the last thirty-five years, occupation has meant dislocation and dispersion; the separation of families; the denial of human, civil, legal, political, and economic rights imposed by a system of military rule; the torture of thousands; the confiscation of tens of thousands of acres of land and the uprooting of tens of thousands of trees; the destruction of more than 7,000 Palestinian homes; the building of illegal Israeli settlements on Palestinian lands and the doubling of the settler population over the last ten years; first the undermining of the Palestinian economy and now its destruction; closure; curfew; geographic fragmentation; demographic isolation; and collective punishment.

Israel's occupation of the Palestinians is not the moral equivalent of the Nazi genocide of the Jews. But it does not have to be. No, this is not genocide, but it is repression, and it is brutal. And it has become frighteningly natural. Occupation is about the domination and dispossession of one people by another. It is about the destruction of their property and the destruction of their soul. Occupation aims, at its core, to deny Palestinians their humanity by denying them the right to determine their existence, to live normal lives in their own homes. Occupation is humiliation. It is despair and desperation. And just as there is no moral equivalence or symmetry between the Holocaust and the occupation, so there is no moral equivalence or symmetry between the occupier and the occupied, no matter how much we as Jews regard ourselves as victims.

And it is from this context of deprivation and suffocation, now largely forgotten, that the

horrific and despicable suicide bombings have emerged and taken the lives of more innocents. Why should innocent Israelis, among them my aunt and her grandchildren, pay the price of occupation? Like the settlements, razed homes, and barricades that preceded them, the suicide bombers have not always been there.

Memory in Judaism—like all memory—is dynamic, not static, embracing a multiplicity of voices and shunning the hegemony of one. But in the post-Holocaust world, Jewish memory has faltered—even failed—in one critical respect: it has excluded the reality of Palestinian suffering and Jewish culpability therein. As a people, we have been unable to link the creation of Israel with the displacement of the Palestinians. We have been unwilling to see, let alone remember, that finding our place meant the loss of theirs. Perhaps one reason for the ferocity of the conflict today is that Palestinians are insisting on their voice despite our continued and desperate efforts to subdue it.

Within the Jewish community it has always been considered a form of heresy to compare Israeli actions or policies with those of the Nazis, and certainly one must be very careful in doing so. But what does it mean when Israeli soldiers paint identification numbers on Palestinian arms; when young Palestinian men and boys of a certain age are told through Israeli loudspeakers to gather in the town square; when Israeli soldiers openly admit to shooting Palestinian children for sport; when some of the Palestinian dead must be buried in mass graves while the bodies of others are left in city streets and camp alleyways because the army will not allow proper burial; when certain Israeli officials and Jewish intellectuals publicly call for the destruction of Palestinian villages in retaliation for suicide bombings or for the transfer of the Palestinian population out of the West Bank and Gaza; when 46 percent of the Israeli public favors such transfers and when transfer or expulsion becomes a legitimate part of popular discourse; when government officials speak of the "cleansing of the refugee camps"; and when a leading Israeli intellectual calls for hermetic separation between Israelis and Palestinians in the form of a Berlin Wall, caring not whether the Palestinians on the other side of the wall may starve to death as a result.

What are we supposed to think when we hear this? What is my mother supposed to think?

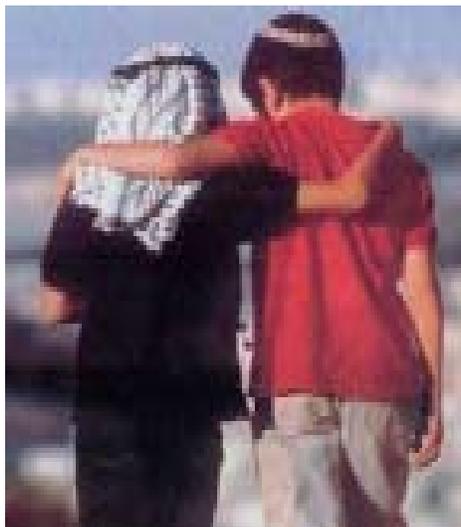
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JOURNEY OF A CHILD continued from page two

In the context of Jewish existence today, what does it mean to preserve the Jewish character of the State of Israel? Does it mean preserving a Jewish demographic majority through any means and continued Jewish domination of the Palestinian people and their land? What is the narrative that we as a people are creating, and what kind of voice are we seeking? What sort of meaning do we as Jews derive from the debasement and humiliation of Palestinians? What is at the center of our moral and ethical discourse? What is the source of our moral and spiritual legacy? What is the source of our redemption? Has the process of creating and rebuilding ended for us?

I want to end this essay with a quote from Irena Klepfisz, a writer and child survivor of the Warsaw ghetto, whose father spirited her and her mother out of the ghetto and then himself died in the ghetto uprising.

"I have concluded that one way to pay tribute to those we loved who struggled, resisted and died is to hold on to their vision and their fierce outrage at the destruction of the ordinary life of their people. It is this outrage



Young Palestinian and Jewish boys

we need to keep alive in our daily life and apply it to all situations, whether they involve Jews or non-Jews. It is this outrage we must use to fuel our actions and vision whenever we see any signs of the disruptions of common life: the hysteria of a mother grieving for the teenager who has been shot; a family stunned in front of a vandalized or demolished home; a family separated, displaced; arbitrary and unjust laws that demand the

closing or opening of shops and schools; humiliation of a people whose culture is alien and deemed inferior; a people left homeless without citizenship; a people living under military rule. Because of our experience, we recognize these evils as obstacles to peace. At those moments of recognition, we remember the past, feel the outrage that inspired the Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto and allow it to guide us in present struggles."

For me, these words define the true meaning of Judaism and the lessons my parents sought to impart.

Source: Sara Roy has told this powerful story, in print and in person, on many occasions. MFSA staff first heard it at the Sabeel Conference in Washington, DC in April of 2006. We have since seen copies on several web sites including, www.ifamericansknew.org.

Sara Roy, author of The Gaza Strip: The Political Economy of De-Development, among other works, is a senior research scholar at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard University. This essay was given as the Second Annual Holocaust Remembrance Lecture at the Center for American and Jewish Studies and the George W. Truett Seminary, Baylor University, on 8 April 2002. ❖

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