

The Revd Alison Tomlin
President of the Methodist Conference

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7 December 2010

Mr Vivian Wineman
President
The Board of Deputies of British Jews
8 Bloomsbury Square
London
WC1A 2LP

Dear Vivian,

I am hoping that we may look to our meeting in the near future. Before we meet, I would like to assure the Jewish community that the Methodist Church:

1. Unequivocally affirms the right of Israel to exist as an independent state and in security and peace alongside a Palestinian state;
2. Has agreed to explore the meaning and scope of 'Christian Zionism.' This term refers to a theological belief held by some Christians that links events in the Middle East to the Second Coming of Christ as foretold in the New Testament. We reiterate that its meaning is different and separate from the concept of Zionism. We acknowledged our own need to understand these two terms better;
3. Has directed its Faith and Order Committee to undertake exploration of Christian Zionism and report this to a future Conference. The Jewish community, including the Board of Deputies, will be consulted appropriately throughout the process through the Council of Christians and Jews;
4. Absolutely opposes antisemitism in all its forms. In fact in 1983 the Methodist Church passed a notice of motion on antisemitism which said "The Conference records its distress in recent times of antisemitic actions against the homes and places of worship of Jewish people in Britain and elsewhere, notably Western Europe and the Soviet Union. It confesses that Christian history and belief have been gravely disfigured by sinful prejudice against Jews and urged Methodists and local Methodist churches to resist and condemn expressions of antisemitism, and encourage relations of love, respect and dialogue with Judaism and Jewish people." We continue to stand by the full meaning and intent of this notice of motion;
5. The Methodist Church is not advocating a general boycott of Israel. Resolution 14/9 of the Report at the 2010 Methodist Conference only called for a boycott of goods from the settlements in the occupied territories. We regret that some media and others may have reported or interpreted it differently;

6. Acknowledges the 2010 Report on Israel Palestine caused distress to the Jewish people. This is deeply regretted and was not our intention. However, we have firmly committed and proactively sought to improve dialogue with the Jewish community, which has already begun with positive outcomes in a number of locations around the country;
7. Encourages relations of respect and dialogue with Judaism and the Jewish people, both at the level of our joint leaderships and in local communities.

We do feel that there is now a desire within the Methodist Church and Board of Deputies leadership to build on this to resume a relationship built on deeper understanding and mutual respect.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alison Tomlin', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Revd Alison Tomlin

President of the Conference of the Methodist Church in Britain

CC: Mr Jon Benjamin, Chief Executive of the Board of Deputies
Revd Dr Martyn Atkins, General Secretary of the Methodist Church
Ms Christine Elliott, Secretary for External Relationships of the Methodist Church
Dr Joy Barrow, Inter Faith Relations Officer of the Methodist Church