

Draft reply to Memorials M7-M9 (2020)

Contact name and details	Ms Jude Levermore, Head of Mission LevermoreJ@methodistchurch.org.uk
---------------------------------	--

Memorials M7-M9 (2020) were referred to the Council by the 2020 Conference. The Council considered them at its meeting in January 2021, through discussion in a focus group and in plenary session.

The Council now needs to consider the text of its report to be recommended to the Conference for adoption as the Conference's further reply.

A draft is shown below, which is offered in the light of the discussions in January.

M7 Israel and Palestine

The Leeds North and East (27/2) Circuit Meeting (Present: 46; Voting: 37 for, 2 against), believes in the equal Human Rights of all Palestinians and Israelis, supported by International Law and UN Resolutions. Given that the US and Israeli governments' proposed 'Peace Plan' explicitly rejects this belief, now is the time for a different approach from all those campaigning for a just settlement. We therefore call on the Conference to review and reassess its approach and specifically to request JACEI (Joint Advisory Committee on Ethical Investments) to urgently consider again disinvesting in all companies that profit from activities in illegally occupied areas, as a matter of ethical and economic justice.

M8 Israel and Palestine

The Leeds South and West (27/1) Circuit Meeting (Present 54; Voting: 40 for, 1 against), notes with concern that Methodist statements on Israel Palestine all assume that a two-state solution is the way to resolve a situation that is growing increasingly dire for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. Following the US declaration that America does not consider Israeli settlements in the West Bank to be illegal under international law, and President Trump's Middle East Peace Plan, which involves the annexation and incorporation of large parts of the West Bank into the state of Israel, the Palestinians will be left with only fragments of territory, which would appear to make an independent Palestinian state virtually impossible.

In the light of this situation, we call upon the Conference to review the 2016 investment policy (prepared by the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment) as a matter of urgency, and ask that the Central Finance Board cease investment in all companies which profit from Israel's Occupation of Palestine. In view of the fact that Israel is the party with power on the ground, and has the capacity to give equal human rights to Palestinians and Israelis, we urge the Conference to give Israel every encouragement to do this.

M9 Israel Palestine

The South Worcestershire (5/16) Circuit Meeting (Present: 39; Voting: 31 for; 6 against) notes with deep concern the deteriorating situation for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, due to the Israeli Occupation. Within the last year the political situation has further reduced the chance of an independent, viable Palestinian state. Implications for Palestine include the cutting of funding to UNRWA from US, a statement that the US no longer deems West Bank settlements inconsistent with international law, and the recent Middle East Plan announced by President Trump at the end of

January. The Israeli electrical company has recently reduced the supply of electricity to Palestine resulting in extensive power cuts. In addition economic prospects are looking bleak for Palestinians. In the light of this situation we urge the Conference to encourage Methodists to continue to pray and work for a viable, independent Palestinian state, or a single state of Israel/Palestine with equal citizenship for all communities, and in the meantime to adopt the same policy as the Quakers not to invest any funds in companies profiting from the Occupation of Palestine, therefore requesting the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI) to commend this policy with all urgency to the Central Finance Board.

Draft reply

The Conference thanks the Circuit Meetings for these memorials, which were referred to the Methodist Council for a full consideration. At its January 2021 meeting the Council considered and discussed the report MC/21/18. This led to the request (18/2) by the Council that the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI) review the Central Finance Board (CFB) Policy Statement on Israel/Palestine within a manageable timeframe and propose a schedule for this work within its Annual Report to the 2021 Conference.

The Conference expresses appreciation of the work of JACEI and holds in high regard the extensive work of the Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church in the field of ethical investment and corporate engagement. The Conference reiterates its concern regarding the dire humanitarian situation in the Gaza where health services have been stretched further by COVID-19 and notes the deepening occupation and facto annexation of much of the West Bank.

The Conference notes the systemic challenges that come with the further integration of settlements into the legislative and economic fabric of the State of Israel. It is concerned that companies that form a part of the investment holdings of the Methodist Church and have operations in Israel are accountable with respect to their approach towards the occupied territories and exercise due diligence to ensure that their operations do not provide financial or other assistance to the occupation. The Conference endorses the recommendation considered by the Methodist Council on the exclusion from investment of companies operating in settlement areas in the occupied Palestinian territories.

The Conference longs to see a just resolution to the occupation in order that all in the region may enjoy security and peace. The Conference encourages Methodists to pray for political leaders on all sides so that the current deadlock can be overcome and fundamental rights afforded to all.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

46/1. The Council receives the report.

46/2. The Council recommends the report to the Conference for adoption as its reply to Memorials M7-M9 (2020).