



PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

March 6, 2014

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

As we enter into the season of Lent, we are called to reflect upon our faith, our discipleship, and our lives as Christians. Central to our calling is the commitment to be peacemakers. God speaks to us in Isaiah, saying:

I will appoint Peace as your overseer and Righteousness as your taskmaster. Violence shall no more be heard in your land, devastation or destruction within your borders; you shall call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise. (Isaiah 60:17b-18)

As followers of Jesus Christ, we are called to practice peace in all of our relationships, including our economic ones. Desiring to be faithful to that call, the 220th General Assembly (2012) endorsed “a boycott of all Israeli products coming from the occupied Palestinian Territories.” The General Assembly has chosen the witness of this boycott as a non-violent strategy for bringing the daily realities faced by Palestinians and Israelis alike closer to God’s vision for the world.

This action by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is a response to a call by Palestinian civil society, including Palestinian Christians, as well as many in the Jewish community who are committed to a just peace. Israeli settlements have been built on occupied Palestinian territory and are illegal under international law. They are part of the ongoing confiscation of Palestinian land and displacement of Palestinian people, enforced by a system of walls, fences and military checkpoints. Companies such as **soda**stream seek to justify the location of their production facilities on illegally occupied Palestinian land by arguing that it allows them to provide employment for hundreds of Palestinians. The downside of that, of course, is that this arrangement, which may seem beneficial in the short term, actually perpetuates the injustice of the occupation. Our intent is that this use of economic pressure will encourage **soda**stream and other companies profiting from the occupation to use their influence to support a genuine peace marked by an end to the occupation and justice for the people they are employing.

As we submit ourselves to the Prince of Peace in this Lenten Season, we should be aware of the comprehensive efforts underway to negotiate a peaceful and just solution to the crisis in Israel-Palestine. We can contribute by our own actions for justice, including participation in the boycott, and we can encourage our political leaders in their daunting efforts to find a solution to the conflict. The boycott is intended to contribute to justice and equal rights for all Palestinians and all Israelis, whether they are living in freedom, under occupation, or in exile, and we must offer our prayers to that end.

What can churches and congregants do? We can educate ourselves and our communities about the ongoing situation in Israel-Palestine and the rationale for our General Assembly’s decision to adopt the boycott. We can add our names, and the name of our churches as endorsers of the boycott. As Jesus has taught us, where our treasure lies, there our heart will be also.

Yours in Christ,

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Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)