

Disciples and UCC Leaders issue a Message and Call in response to the “Cry for Hope”

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By Middle East & Europe - Global Ministries

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In response to *Cry for Hope*, the urgent call to end the oppression of the Palestinian people issued by Kairos Palestine and Global Kairos for Justice, the General Ministers and Presidents of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ, as well as the Co-Executives of Global Ministries, have



released a “Message and Call in Response to the Kairos Palestine *Cry for Hope*. The Rev. Teresa Hord Owens and the Rev. Dr. John Dorhauer, General Ministers and Presidents of the Disciples and UCC, respectively, and the Rev. Dr. Julia Brown Karimu and the Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson, Co-Executives of Global Ministries, having received the *Cry for Hope*, have taken the opportunity to reach out to members of the two churches. In their message, they offer ways that the *Cry for Hope* can be studied and acted on by church members. They also reiterate their strong opposition to anticipated Israeli efforts to annex parts of the occupied West Bank, and to occupation.

The full text of their message follows below:

Beloved family of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ,

Greetings in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ! We write at a challenging time for us here in North America—and around the world. The struggle for racial justice in the U.S. has found new strength, tragically impelled by the horrific accounts of the unjustified treatment of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and Raychard Brooks leading to their deaths—evidence of the persistent and sustained racism that we deplore in the strongest terms. We are also in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has led to staggering numbers of infection and death in North America and around the world, while also revealing the gross inequalities and “pre-existing conditions” of poverty, discrimination, and oppression which result in greater vulnerability to the virus.

In this wider context, even as partners, including Palestinian Christians from Kairos Palestine, recognize their connections to the struggle for racial justice and express solidarity with us, global politics and maneuvering continue, perhaps hoping for the shadow of these “distractions.” One such example is the anticipated effort by the Israeli government, led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, to formally annex significant parts of the West Bank—recognized as occupied Palestinian lands—beginning as early as this month. Israeli *de jure* annexation of these lands is illegal under international law, but has had the support of the

current U.S. Administration as articulated in President Trump's "Peace to Prosperity" proposal, which we have criticized, along with other policy shifts by this Administration regarding Israel/Palestine since 2017.

Let us be clear: we reiterate our opposition to Israeli annexation of occupied Palestinian lands and have spoken ecumenically against that, calling on the U.S. Congress "to wield its power of the purse and not allow any United States funds provided to Israel to be used for the recognition, facilitation or support of annexation, or for denial of Palestinian rights and violation of international law, including continuing occupation." We also acknowledge that such Israeli *de jure* annexation would be devastating to any hopes for peace with justice between Israelis and Palestinians while also an extension of decades of *de facto* Israeli annexation of Palestinian lands. In addition, we continue to work against Israel's continued blockade of Gaza and its denial of rights of Palestinian refugees, and are deeply troubled by its 2018 basic law identifying the country as "the nation state of the Jewish people," which openly discriminates against Israel's one-fifth Palestinian Christian and Muslim population.

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ, with mission engagement in the Middle East of more than 170 years, have been consistent supporters of peace with justice between Israelis and Palestinians through our advocacy, informed by partnership relations, the presence of mission co-workers, and General Assembly and General Synod policies.

Just over a decade ago, Palestinian Christians and leaders took the bold step of declaring a *kairos* moment with the issuance of "A Moment of Truth: A Cry of Faith, Hope, and Love from the Heart of Palestinian Suffering." That document has been seminal for Disciples and UCC members in understanding a Palestinian Christian perspective and in taking appropriate action in support of our siblings there.

Today, we receive with our hearts and souls a new plea called, "Cry for Hope: A Decisive Call for Action," issued by our partner, Kairos Palestine, and its associated global network, Global Kairos for Justice. This "Cry for Hope" outlines the current context in Israel/Palestine and calls Christians and churches around the world "to engage in a process of study, reflection and confession concerning the historic and systemic deprivation of the rights of the Palestinian people and the use of the Bible by many to justify and support this oppression." It states very clearly, "We cannot serve God while remaining silent about the oppression of the Palestinians." The letter continues, challenging the global Christian community to take bold, faithful, and resolute actions "to formally reject the oppression of the Palestinian people and any use of the Bible to justify this injustice," enumerating seven specific such actions. The Disciples and UCC, as advocates for peace with justice, have engaged several of these already as denominations, and many of our members are involved directly. We confess that we have not done enough to end Palestinian oppression without accountability or to change our countries' policies that enable Israel to continue to violate international laws with impunity.

We therefore commend to you, as faithful members of our churches and people committed to God’s vision of peace and justice in the world, this new letter, this “[Cry for Hope](#).” We urge you to read and study the “Cry for Hope,” as well as the original Kairos Palestine “Moment of Truth” (2009) document, individually and in your congregations, and discern ways to engage the specific action areas. This may include the calls to:

- Explore both the current realities Palestinians experience and the theologies that have supported their oppression, offering “theologies that prophetically call for an inclusive vision of the land for Israelis and Palestinians, affirming that the creator God is a God of love, mercy and justice.”
- Learn how to support non-violent resistance to “occupation, dispossession, and abrogation of [Palestinians’] fundamental rights, including supporting the right to use economic measures, advocating with the US government and state governments as appropriate, and exercising responsibility in stewardship of investments and purchases.
- Become involved in interreligious dialogue and coalitions to support peace with justice for Israelis and Palestinians, as well as in all circumstances, including here in North America, and work against racism and discrimination in all their forms, including anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim acts and speech.
- “Come and see” the land often called “holy” to visit the places of our faith story, and to encounter our partner churches and organizations while there to learn about the current reality. Global Ministries staff is prepared to assist in making those encounters possible, when travel again is possible.

You may also wish to consider [affixing your name as a supporter of this call](#).

As the authors of the “Cry for Hope” conclude, “we embrace our membership in the community of the broken bread, the church fulfilling its mission to bring the good news of God’s gift of love, mercy, compassion, and abundant life for all.” This embrace means committing to work for peace and justice where they are lacking, and to demonstrate the good news in all that we do.

In Christ,

Rev. Dr. John Dorhauer
General Minister and President
United Church of Christ

Rev. Teresa Hord Owens
General Minister and President
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson
Associate General Minister
Wider Church Ministries, UCC
Co-Executive, Global Ministries

Rev. Dr. Julia Brown Karimu
President
Division of Overseas Ministries, Disciples
Co-Executive, Global Ministries

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