



The United Church
of Canada
General Council

GC45 BNS02 Development of a Post Gaza Theology for Summer 2025

True Document Date: August 8, 2025

Origin: Justice, Mission and Outreach Committee of Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters and Bermuda Nova Scotia

1. What is the issue? Why is it important?

We have witnessed in real time genocide against the people of Gaza - an atrocity that has challenged our morality, ethics and ultimately our **theology**. As we have watched this horror unfold, many have come to realize that the international rules-based order as well as many theological understandings that emerged after World War II now lay in ruin under the rubble of Gaza.

From a theological perspective some have recognized that the people of Palestine have long struggled against Zionism, Christian Zionism, Apartheid, Christian Nationalism and an entrenched acceptance of Israel's settler-colonial project backed by Western powers.

Palestinian churches are pleading for our support including collaborating with them as well as with other willing churches and interfaith groups to help shape a new Post Gaza Theological understanding from this conflict that calls people of faith back to the vision of Micah 6:8, "To do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God.

2. What is happening now?

For the past several months, the world has watched as the people of Gaza endure starvation, the spread of disease, and a level of death and devastation that can only be described as apocalyptic. As this proposal is being shared with regional councils; the ceasefire has

collapsed, Israel has blocked all humanitarian aid to Gaza and in the West Bank Palestinians are facing ethnic cleansing, severe restrictions on their movement, increased land confiscations and property demolitions, and settler violence has increased and become more intense.

On December 19, 2024, [Kairos Palestine](#) issued a statement out of desperation, highlighting the global church's lack of support for more than five decades—even during the ongoing genocide. As a positive example, they cited a statement from the United Church of Christ (USA), which follows the model of the *Barmen Theological Declaration* against National Socialism in Church and Society. The first article of [the United Church of Christ declaration](#) states:

We affirm that the continued oppression of the Palestinian people remains, after more than five decades of oppression of the Palestinian people, a matter of theological urgency and represents a sin in violation of the message of the biblical prophets and the Gospel, and that all efforts to defend or legitimate the oppression of the Palestinian people, whether passive or active, through silence, word, or deed by the Christian community, represent a fundamental denial of the Gospel.

“We reject the notion that Israel’s occupation of Palestine is a purely political problem outside the concern of the church or that the oppression of the Palestinian people is an inevitable consequence of global or regional geopolitical interest.” (Emphasis added)

We are thankful that the General Secretary and Moderator have issued statements to the Canadian government calling on it to suspend diplomatic relations with Israel, implement an arms embargo, and other measures. Members of the denomination have been asked to pray, deepen their understanding of the conflict, and provide financial support to relief efforts for the people of Gaza.

Yet, we note, many churches, including some in the United Church of Canada, believe that God unconditionally gave the land of Palestine/Israel to Abraham and that the modern state of Israel is a continuation of that Biblical promise. This belief, rooted in Christian Zionism, reinforces misconceptions about how the Bible is meant to be interpreted in our time and context and promotes a one-sided approach especially to Palestine/Israel. Further, it reinforces negative understandings of Palestinians and gives tacit support to the genocidal attacks and ethnic cleansing of Gaza rather than a genuine Christian response rooted in peace with justice.

By moving forward with this proposal, the General Council will demonstrate that the United Church of Canada's response to the calls of our international ecumenical partners is rooted not only in the Canadian context but also in the global context, fostering a theological approach to Deep Spirituality, Bold Discipleship, and Daring Justice.

3. What is the recommendation?

1. That the General Council form a task group, beyond the Theology and InterChurch InterFaith Committee (TICIF), to support and collaborate with our Palestinian partners [Global Kairos Palestine](#) and [Sabeel Education and Liberation Theology](#) in the development of a theology for the Post Gaza world.

(It must be recognized that this is a nascent movement. It is not well known because most are focused on the immediate crisis of the genocide and ethnic cleansing occurring that is occurring in real time in Palestine. Currently, a few international theologians are beginning to join the discussion and make contributions.)

- The task group seek permission from Palestinian partners to invite other interested denominations, church-related organizations, Canadian Palestinians and interfaith groups to join this work
 - In due course, it will be important for the Task Group to search out and/or develop resources for congregational usage.
2. Further that the Task Group review the United Church document, [Bearing Faithful Witness](#) and report to the General Council on whether the document in its current form contributes to an anti-Palestinian bias within the denomination because of its failure to discuss the settler-colonial aspects of Israel in light of the illegal Israeli occupation and its genocide against Gaza. Also, whether the document contributes to what the late Jewish theologian, Marc Ellis, referred to as the "[interfaith ecumenical deal](#)" wherein churches remain silent on Zionist ethnonationalism and the oppression of Palestinians in order to avoid appearing antisemitic.

4. Background information:

1. Commissioners should remember that our Palestinian partners are in the midst of a genocide and are managing a multitude of crises. As a result, how and when they respond may not align with the schedules or our usual expectations.
2. From conversations with [Rifat Kasis](#) of Global Kairos Palestine and [Omar Haramy](#) of Sabeel Jerusalem, we know that this is a priority for their groups, and they want to collaborate with partners on developing a Post-Gaza Theology. However, this theological endeavor is still emerging, and there is currently limited material available for Commissioners.
3. It may be helpful for Commissioners to review [The Principles for Justice Work in the United Church of Canada](#), which were adopted in October 2023.
4. The Keough School of Global Affairs at Notre Dame University, in the publication *Contending Modernities*, have published four articles on [Theology After Gaza](#). Note: Currently, the main person focusing publicly on a Post Gaza Theology is [Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb](#), other members of Global Kairos Palestine and Sabeel are focusing on other strategic work.
5. At General Council 43 and 44, Commissioners were reminded by Rev Philip Peacock, Executive Secretary for Justice and Witness of the World Communion of Reformed Churches of the importance of the United Church remembering its call to look beyond our denominational concerns. He emphasized that engagement with other Christian communities should fundamentally change us. This call is especially crucial in light of the situation in Palestine.
6. Sabeel released in the summer of 2023 [This Is Where We Stand](#) a document focusing on overcoming antisemitism. It was written in collaboration with Jewish and Islamic leaders in Palestine and looked toward building a peaceful coexistence in the Holy Land and beyond. Since October 2023, the escalating violence in Gaza and across Palestine has led to a sharp rise in antisemitism, Islamophobia, and anti-Palestinian racism, both in Canada and around the world. Yet, Sabeel and Kairos Palestine remain committed to peace with justice for all people.

7. Kairos Palestine, December 19, 2024: [Call to European Churches: Why are you silent in the face of genocide?](#)
8. Kairos Palestine, January 20, 2025: [The Palestinian Christian Initiative - Kairos Palestine Statement on Gaza Ceasefire Agreement](#)
9. Kairos Palestine, February 6, 2025 [A Betrayal of Justice: Kairos Palestine Rejects Trump's Ethnic Cleansing Proposal and Calls for Global Action](#)
10. It is important for General Council Commissioners to reflect on the experience of those who attended the last General Council. Several Commissioners have spoken about their concerns with respect to how proposals dealing with Palestine were handled. Barbara Cairns, a Commissioner from Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters and Linda Scherzinger, a Commissioner from Bermuda Nova Scotia write,

"We still remember, with deep sadness how Omar Haramy was given very little opportunity to speak, after any action for Palestinian justice was delayed by the Council, it was from his deep disappointment and despair at the lack of support and understanding of the Palestinian reality. He warned us: *"Next year will be too late."*

The Moderator dismissed him as if he had spoken out of turn, as if his plea was an inconvenience, and impolite. We were ashamed, heartbroken, and moved to tears by how he was treated."

Unfortunately, Omar's warning that next year will be too late came to pass as we witness the genocide in Gaza and the Gazafication of the West Bank. Additionally, there are strong forces pushing the United States government to give Israel the right to annex the West Bank.

5. How does this proposal help us to live into our church's commitments on equity?

This proposal builds upon the Justice Principles adopted by the General Council in October 2023. It allows the denomination to take a further step in our decolonizing approach to theology, which is foundational to our worship and witness. It will provide the opportunity for

a variety of voices to be heard particularly from our global partners in recognizing how we are shaped by God and called to stand in solidarity especially with those who are marginalized. It will ultimately help the people of The United Church of Canada deepen our faith relationship with God, our human siblings, and with creation.

For the body transmitting this proposal to the General Council:

Please select the appropriate option and provide the key discussion points for items being forwarded to the General Council:

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree without forwarding to the General Council
- ☐ Disagree and forwarding to the General Council

If you have questions regarding this proposal, please send them to: GCinfo@united-church.ca

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