

METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON, D.C. SYNOD OF THE ELCA
ELECTRONIC SYNOD COUNCIL MEETING
October 1-4, 2024

The Synod Council conducted a meeting through electronic communications in order to address the following motion:

To adopt the resolution as described in the document “Council Motion on Gaza Resolution – as submitted to Council”

The motion comes to you having been reviewed by the Executive Committee and the original authors of the Synod Assembly motion. This is moved by VP Jennifer Slagle Peck and seconded by Bishop Ortiz.

Secretary Barbara Bilodeau presented the motion in an email to all Synod Council members sent on Tuesday, October 1, 2024 at 5:45 PM. The voting was held open until 11 AM on Friday, October 4, 2024.

The following identifies the members who voted on the motion by means of a responding electronic mail message:

Voting:

Bishop Leila Ortiz, Bishop
Jennifer Slagle Peck, Vice President
Barbara Bilodeau, Secretary
Julie Hamre, Treasurer
Sheena Foster, DC – Lay
Rachad Ya Ntima Esengo, Maryland – Lay
Pr. Eric T. Randolph, Maryland - Rostered
Pr. Alexander P. Stall, Jr., Potomac – Rostered
Don Wallace, Virginia - Lay
Pr. Henry Langknecht, Virginia – Rostered
Nolan G, At-Large Youth

Vote arrived after deadline:

Pr. Betty Landis, Montgomery – Rostered
Patrick Anderson, Potomac – Lay

Not Voting:

Pr. Judith VanOsdol, DC – Rostered
Breeze Lawless, Fairfax - Lay
Pr. Elijah Mwitanti, Fairfax - Rostered
Anita Smallin, Montgomery - Lay

All 11 votes cast were in favor, no abstain, and no votes opposed. The motion was voted on by a majority of the members of the Synod Council, and was approved by a majority of those members voting.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara A. Bilodeau
Secretary

The Synod Council receives Resolution Number 2024-004, entitled “Peace in Gaza and Israel,” from the 2024 Synod Assembly. The Council recognizes the importance of the issues raised in the resolution and appreciates the invitation to our synod to engage in both praying for and actively working toward peace with justice.

In consideration of the resolution and in light of the dire situation facing our siblings in Gaza and Israel, the Synod Council Executive Committee met with the sponsors of the resolution and solicited further comments from the synod on how to respond to the situation in Gaza and Israel. The synod council considered the comments made at the assembly and those collected over the summer and engaged in a lengthy discussion of the resolution at our September 7, 2024 meeting.

The synod council also considered the statements previously made by our church with regard to this most recent conflict in Gaza and Israel, including:

- Bishop Ortiz’s **October 17, 2023** public statement reflecting on her time visiting Gaza and Israel, recognizing the complexity of the conflict, naming the violence that is occurring, and encouraging us to become informed of the facts, to use our faith to proclaim the reality of what is going on, and to work toward justice in grace and with love;
- The ELCA Conference of Bishop’s **March 3, 2024** public letter to President Biden naming the circle of violence that envelopes Gaza and Israel, calling for a permanent ceasefire to bring a lasting end to the violence, calling for the release of hostages, and advocating for, among other specific steps, both a homeland for Israelis and self-determination for the Palestinian people;
- Presiding Bishop Eaton’s **June 5, 2024** public letter to the church reminding us of our call to be peacemakers and to pray, advocate, and walk with our siblings seeking peace; and
- Churches for Middle East Peace public statement and **July 23, 2024** letter to President Biden, signed by over 200 Christian leaders, including Presiding Bishop Eaton, urging world powers to end complicity in the ongoing violence and atrocities committed in Gaza as a part of the ongoing war between Israel and Hamas.

Furthermore, the synod council considered our call to action in light of our church’s social teachings and statements, including:

- Social Policy Resolution CC02.04.25a, entitled “Palestine and Support for the Church,” adopted by the **2002 Churchwide Assembly** and seeking an end to violence in Palestine, a ceasefire, and sustained peace with justice;
- Social Policy Resolution CA 13.06.27, entitled “Peacemaking with Justice in Israel and Palestine,” adopted by the **2013 Churchwide Assembly**, reaffirming the commitment of our church to, among other things, continue awareness-building, accompaniment, and advocacy on behalf of a peaceful resolution of the conflict between Israel and Palestine;

- Social Policy Resolution CA16.05.15, entitled “2016: For Peace in the Holy Land,” adopted by the **2016 Churchwide Assembly**, reaffirming the commitment of our church to seek a peaceful resolution of the conflict between Israel and Palestine and encouraging all involved with our church to call upon decision-makers to take action, including calling on the U.S. President to recognize the State of Palestine and not prevent the application of the State of Palestine for full membership in the United Nations

Together, these social teachings and statements, as well as other statements made by our church calling for the protection of human rights and the end to violence in multiple conflicts around the world, require us to name the harm being inflicted in Gaza and Israel, to speak out against it, and to invite our congregations and members to do the same. We therefore:

1. **Encourage Bishop Ortiz to make a public statement affirming our call to be peacemakers and advocating for the United State Government to:** secure an immediate and permanent ceasefire, secure the release of all hostages and unlawfully detained political prisoners, recognize the State of Palestine and engage further in seeking a political solution to the conflict that ensures the security of the State of Israel while ending efforts to undermine Palestinian self-determination, and establish access to humanitarian aid to all of Gaza.
2. Empower the **Middle East Working Group within our synod to promote education, advocacy, and prayer for peace in Gaza and Israel through:** regular opportunities to connect, written resources to promote knowledge building and prayer, and resources to facilitate advocacy.
3. **Invite congregations within our synod and members of those congregations, as well as our entire metropolitan Washington, DC community, to:** pray for our Palestinian and Israeli siblings, including those actively working to seek justice, equality, reconciliation and peace; support our church leaders’ calls for peace and justice by sending follow-up letters and making calls to decision-makers; affirm the work of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, the Lutheran World Federation, and the Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel in bringing comfort, support, and relief to those who are suffering in Palestine and Israel; participate in offerings of the Middle East Working Group within our synod; and be informed about and engaged in the SUMUD (formerly Peace Not Walls) initiative of the ELCA.

Through this motion, we commit to supporting efforts within the synod to bring peace to Gaza and Israel, including through the above actions. And we continue to pray for peace with justice through our thoughts, voices, and actions.