The Alliance of Baptists Respond to The Kairos Palestine Document

The Alliance of Baptists declares through our Covenant, “In our personal and corporate response to the call of God in Jesus Christ to be disciples and servants in the world, we commit ourselves to: The proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ and the calling of God to all peoples to repentance and faith, reconciliation and hope, social and economic justice.” This commitment is expressed in a number of our Mission statements. We want to “pursue justice with and for those who are oppressed; foster relationships within the Alliance and with other people of faith; and work for peace.” Underlying our covenant is the belief that God is a lover of justice (Isaiah 61:8), and we are called to collaborate and participate with God in the work of making justice. It is also our belief that the Spirit of God leads us to follow the Way of Jesus.

The Alliance of Baptists’ Community for Justice in Palestine and Israel is established on this foundation. Following Jesus in doing justice is challenging in our world; and in the birthplace of our Savior, it is also complicated. We are convinced that when justice exists, peace will follow. Martin Luther King Jr. taught us that justice and love are inseparable forces given to us by God to usher in God’s kingdom on earth.

Even while living under the injustices of the 46-year Israeli military occupation, Palestinians we have met still radiate hope. They continue to seek peace with justice. They are crying out to Christians from all corners of the world. Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb, a mission partner with The Alliance of Baptists, is one of the authors of Kairos Palestine - A Moment of Truth: A Word of faith, hope and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering (2009). This document represents the most prevalent views of Palestinian Christians living in the occupied territories.

“We, a group of Christian Palestinians, after prayer, reflection and an exchange of opinion, cry out from within the suffering in our country, under the Israeli occupation…. The cruel circumstances in which the Palestinian Church has lived and continues to live have required the Church to clarify her faith and to identify her vocation… Today, we bear the strength of love rather than that of revenge, a culture of life rather than a culture of death.”

The document goes on to quote Scripture.

"You have heard it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven…” [We] endorse nonviolent resistance based on hope and love that puts an end to evil by walking in the ways of justice.”
We, the Alliance of Baptists, hear their cry and are moved to decisive action. Our community seeks to follow the model of First Century Jesus by assuming our prophetic voice and “speaking truth to power” in Twenty-first Century Palestine and Israel. We confess our fear and reluctance to use our prophetic voice and our enormous resources in following the example of Jesus in working for peace with justice. We join with Palestinians in their “nonviolent resistance based on hope and love.”

Our actions begin with prayer. We know that war, oppression, and injustice in Palestine and Israel have victims on all sides. The oppressors and the oppressed are both victims of the oppression. We pray for peace with justice in Palestine and Israel for Jews, Muslims, and Christians.

The Board of the Alliance recognizes the critical need to work for peace with justice in Palestine and Israel. The Board blesses and endorses the work of the Justice in Palestine and Israel Community.

The Justice in Palestine and Israel Community commit ourselves to:

1. Send to our entire member churches curricula and instructional materials to study the Kairos Palestine document.
2. Make resources available for the study of the conflict in Palestine and Israel.
3. Create a speakers bureau of Christian and Muslim Palestinians and Israeli and American Jews who are working for peace through justice.
4. Collect and distribute personal stories of Palestinians and Jews living with conflict and violence.
5. Organize regular trips to Palestine and Israel to see the religious and historic sites and to meet Palestinians and Israelis working for peace through justice.
6. Study both individual and corporate divestment opportunities from companies who are profiting from and perpetuating the illegal occupation of Palestinian territories.
7. Study possible individual, church and corporate investment opportunities through the Bethlehem Development Initiative.
8. Advocate with our elected officials for an end to the U.S. government's economic, political and military support of the ongoing Israeli occupation.
9. Influence the leaders of our government to move the US to establish its unique leadership as an evenhanded mediator of the conflict between Palestinians and Israel.
10. Avoid stereotyping and other forms of racism and religious bigotry directed against Jews and Muslims.

Therefore, in response to the pleas of Palestinian Christians living in Palestine, The Alliance of Baptists Board calls upon members of the Alliance, individual and corporate, to support the Community as it works to carry out this commitment.