

Preserving American Jewish History

### MS-603: Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum Collection, 1945-1992.

- Series C: Interreligious Activities. 1952-1992
- Box 39, Folder 9, National Council of Churches, 1981.

#### THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

date May 18, 1982

to Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum

from Rabbi A. James Rudin

subject National Council of Churches Middle East Resolution, May 1982

The Governing Board of the National Council of Churches met in Nashville, Tennessee from May 13-15, 1982. This current Board will serve through 1984, and approximately 40% of its membership is new to the Board. There were five distinct and predictable stages in the development and final passage of the Middle East Resolution

Step I - In March a harsh and one-sided anti-Israel resolution was prepared by a group within the Division of Overseas Ministries of the NCC. The Office on Christian-Jewish Relations as well as the Task Force on Christian-Muslim Relations were bypassed in the initial drafting process. In early April, 1982 we were confronted with an unbalanced anti-Israel statement that, if passed, would have been one of the worst Middle East resolutions ever adopted by a major American Christian body.

<u>Step II</u> - The proposed draft resolution was shared with national Jewish agencies as well as with members of the NCC Advisory Committee on Christian-Jewish Relations Their response was swift and immediate. The resolution was severely criticized and many suggested changes and amendments were put forward. The IAD was central in this effort as we maintained extremely close contacts with our friends at the NCC.

<u>Step III</u> - A revised version of the resolution was prepared which marked an improvement over the first draft, and a series of proposed amendments were also suggested by NCC officials. This revised version with the proposed amendments was also shared with national Jewish agencies, and again the reaction was immediate and direct. We acknowledged some improvement, and offered specific amendments and changes. While this was going on there were reports that the top leadership of the NCC, President James Armstrong, and General Secretary Claire Randall, wanted the entire resolution withdrawn. Although they may have desired this, they were unable to prevent the resolution from coming to the Governing Board floor. There are many anti-Israel forces at the NCC, both on and off the Board who wanted a Middle East resolution at this time. The statement that emerged from the NCC was an "establishment" document that could not easily be dismissed or defeated as the resolutions introduced by Frank Maria of the Antiochian Orthodox Church have been in the past.

<u>Step IV</u> - In early May, Bishop Armstrong and Dr. Randall were directly brought into the actual drafting process along with Rev. Joan Campbell, the Executive Director of CORLE. Thus, the final revisions were made at the highest

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levels of the NCC and the final resolution was the product of these negotiations. Several of our major suggestions were incorporated into the text and we were able to have some negative and one-sided sections removed from the resolution. However, on the eve of the Nashville meeting it was clear that there were two critical areas that were unacceptable to us.

- 1. There was no specific call for the removal of foreign troops and weapons from Lebanon
- 2 The NCC call on the Unites States Government to enter into an "open dialogue" with the PLO without any preconditions

Step V - Upon my arrival in Nashville as a fraternal observer I soon discovered that many of our friends and key allies of the past were either not members of the new Board, or were absent from this meeting. Such stalwarts as Episcopal Bishop John Burt, Dr. David Taylor and Dr George Telford of the Presbyterian Church in the US and others are no longer on the Board. In addition, Dr Robert Huston of the United Methodist Church, Dr. Robert Campbell of the American Baptist Churches, Bishop James Cummings of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church and Dr. Arie Brouwer of the Reformed Church of America were not present in Nashville

I had a long and intense negotiating session with Richard Butler, the NCC's Middle East specialist. Also attending the meeting were Rev David Simpson, the Executive Director of the NCC's Office on Christian-Jewish Relations, and Rev. William Weiler of the Episcopal Delegation and the former NCC Director of Christian-Jewish Relations Basically it was a "one on one" meeting between me and Butler. Dick agreed to accept my amendment that called for the removal of all foreign troops and weapons from Lebanon. Compromise language was added to line 29 at the end of ". .all Lebanon " "This will require the removal of all foreign armed personnel and weapons or the Lebanese government's control of these groups and those mot sanctioned by the Lebanese government."

This amendment includes not only the PLO and the Syrians, but the Israeli and the Haddad controlled Christian militia groups as well. Because of some previous consultation with several members of the Greek Orthodox delegation, I was able to seal off and prevent any amendments or new Middle East resolutions from Frank Maria. With the knowledge that Maria would be silenced (which indeed did happen), I pressed for a strong amendment to the most important section of the entire resolution lines 96-99 dealing with the PLO. My "provided that the PLO officially recognize Israel's right to language was exist as a sovereign state, and join in ceasing all hostile actions." Butler refused to accept this amendment, but David and I felt that it was worthwhile to press for the passage of this amendment on the floor of the Governing Board We were able to get Rev James Reid of Albany, New York, a member of the Reformed Church of America, to introduce my amendment, which was seconded by Andrew Vance, an influential New York lawyer and a member of the Greek Orthodox Church. Speaking in behalf of the amendment were Rev Jeanne Audrey Powers of the United Methodist Church, Episcopal Bishop Gerald McAllister of Oklahoma and Weiler

As I indicated to you in our phone conversation before the vote, I revised our draft press release to include the Lebanese amendment. The actual voting on the Middle East resolution took only 25 minutes and was relatively calm. Speaking against the amendment were Dr. Oscar McCloud of the United Presbyterian Church, Dr. Randy Nugent of the United Methodist Church, Rev. Olaf Scott of the Antiochian Orthodox Church, Rev.'Syngham Rhee of the United Presbyterian Church, and a member of the Friends delegation. The amendment on the PLO was defeated by about a 3 to 1 margin, and the Lebanese amendment was unanimously accepted. Following the passage of the resolution I issued our press release to the Associated Press, the UPI, RNS, JTA, the <u>New York Times</u>, the <u>Boston Globe</u> and other media, both in person, by phone and by messenger.

The entire exercise had a predictable quality from the very beginning. Our friends at the NCC were once again ambushed by the anti-Israel, anti-Zionist forces within the DOM, and both they and we were forced to play "catch up" in our vigorous attempts to modify and improve the original amendment. With great effort, time and energy and with the use of some of our "credit cards," we had a great deal of positive impact and influence on the final resolution. This involved a wide range of contacts including continuing conversations with Joan Campbell, Claire Randall, and Jim Armstrong who were brought into the actual negotiating process. From the outset there was never a realistic chance that the amendment would be withdrawn, and after several weeks of intense negotiations, our differences with the NCC were narrowed to the section on the PLO Our policy is in sharp and total variance with the NCC's. Since 1974, the NCC has called on the US government to meet with the PLO without any preconditions. We are adamently opposed to such a policy while the NCC on the other hand ardently supports it. In addition, the 1980 Middle East policy statement calls for mutual recognition and negotiations between Israel and the PLO based on reciprocal simultaneous actions. Here, too, we differ with the NCC, and it was on this point that we publicly criticized the NCC for its position.

It is clear from the vote on the PLO section and from Dick Butler's refusal to accept my amendment that the NCC is not prepared at this time to change its basic position vis-a-vis the U.S. Government and the PLO. If we are serious about bringing about a change on this substantive matter, we need to undertake a comprehensive, serious and systematic campaign to reach every member of the Governing Board and key NCC staff people The main source of opposition to our position is found within the Eastern Orthodox Churches, (except for a few members of the Greek Orthodox delegation) along with the overwhelming majority of the black members of the NCC Governing Board. The public stances of Oscar McCloud and Randy Nugent carried an enormous amount of weight O within the Board, especially among the group's new members

Joan and David have resolved that "never again" will the Office on Christian-Jewish Relations be caught off guard by the introduction of another anti-Israel resolution They intend to be "present at the creation" of any future resolution, to prevent an anti-Israel bias I have heard this promise before, and it remains to be seen whether this one will come true.

The entire exercise was a classic in NCC-AJC relations. We were confronted with an outrageous statement, we prepared and delivered two substantive memos filled with changes and amendments prior to the national meeting The NCC accepted some, but not all of our changes As the only Jewish representative at the Nashville meeting, I entered into personal negotiations with Dick Butler and others. I was able to get one amendment added to the resolution and provided the second amendment that was, unfortunately, defeated in a floor fight. Following the vote, I issued our press release that strongly criticized the NCO for the PLO section, while commending it for other parts of the resolution. Given the fact that the anti-Israel forces had the offensive edge, I think we did extremely well to achieve the results we did. The entire process is important since it lends support to our NCC friends and helps educate the Governing Board members to the realities of the Middle East. Furthermore, the personal involvement of Jim Armstrong and Claire Randall is always important.

I believe our area directors should undertake a series of meetings with the Governing Board members who reside in their areas, especially those members who are sympathetic to our positions or who are neutral or simply ignorant of the Middle East. I can provide such a list for our CSD colleagues and it might be helpful that when members of the IAD visit the field, meetings with NCC Board members become part of our schedule.

To sum up, we narrowed our differences with the NCC to the absolute minimum, but of course that 'minimum' relates to the PLO and its intent to destroy Israel.

AJR FM Encls.

cc Judith Banki Inge Lederer Gibel Zach Schuster

#### NCC MIDDLE EAST RESOLUTION --- FIRST DRAFT

The final withdrawal of Israeli military forces from the Sinai area occupied in 1967 is an important achievement in the peace process initiated in "A Framework for Peace in the Middle East Agreed at Camp David" in 1978 The faithful conclusion of this agreement demonstrates that negotiation can bring an end to hostilities of long standing in the Middle East.

- Urges the Government of the United States to formulate a new dynamic Middle East policy that
- a. promotes the goal of mutual recognition between Israel and the representatives of the Palestinian people.

Makes possible United States government dialogue with the Palestine Liberation Organization as a means of achieving the above goals. PLO recognition of Israel should be seen as a result of these and other discussions rather than a precondition to dialogue

Calls upon the Arab States and the PLO to encourage the use of diplomatic efforts to achieve a negotiated peace and abandonment of rhetoric which inhibits responsible dialogue.

Calls upon the Israel: Government to state clearly its perceived geographic and other security needs and how it intends to meet them within the context of a peaceful settlement.

#### NCC MIDDLE EAST RESOLUTION ---FINAL VERSION

The faithful conclusion on April 25, 1982 of the first phase of the peace process initiated in "A Framework for Peace in the Middle East Agreed at Camp David" in 1978 was a momentous occasion. Israel has fulfilled its obligation in spite of the difficult and sometimes painful experience related to returning portions of the occupied Sinai to Egypt Egypt has continued in its commitment to peace and its recognition of Israel in spite of criticisms from the Arab world and the assassination of President Sadat. Both Egypt and Israel have demonstrated that negotiation can bring an end to hostilities of long standing in the Middle East.

Urges the Government of the United States to formulate a new dynamic Middle East policy that

a. reaffirms the right of the State of Israel to exist within secure, defined and recognized borders, and affirms the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

Promotes the goal of mutual recognition between Israel and the representatives of the Palestinian people, and undertakes an open United States Government dialogue with the Palestinian Liberation Organization as one means of moving toward this goal.

Calls upon the Arab States, the PLO, and Israel to abandon hostile rhetoric and provocative actions which inhibit responsible dialogue, and to make maximum use of diplomatic efforts to achieve a negotiated peace.

Deleted from final text.

Urges the Government of the United States of America to reaffirm its commitment to the independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Republic of Lebanon as a country where religious pluralism may once again thrive. Resolution of the conflict in Lebanon must be pursued as a matter of high importance in its own right, even though inextricably linked to the Israel-Palestinian conflict.

Not present in the draft text

The Governing Board expresses again its grief and sorrow over the continuing tragedy in Lebanon. It recalls its action of May 15, 1981, recognizing that 'much of the fighting on Lebanese soil is being carried out by non-Lebanese or at the instigation of non-Lebanese" and reiterates its call to the Government of the United States to "work for a solution to the conflict based upon a reassertion of Lebanese sovereignty over all the land and people of Lebanon " This will require the removal of all foreign armed personnel and weapons or the Lebanese government's control of these groups and those not sanctioned by the central Lebanese government. Resolution of the conflict in Lebanon must be pursued as a matter of high importance in its own right, even though inextricably linked to the Israel-Palestinian conflict.

At the same time, the Palestine Liberation Organization has not taken steps which will encourage peace and address the fears of Israelis about long-range PLO objectives as spelled out in the Palestine National Covenant



#### THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE Institute of Human Relations, 165 E 56 St., New York, N Y 10022, (212) 751-4000

The American Jewish Committee founded in 1906, is the pioneer human-relations agency in the United States. It protects the civil and religious rights of Jews here and abroad and advances the cause of improved human relations for all people.

MORTON YARMON, Director of Public Relations

#### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NASHVILLE, TENN., May 13 - The American Jewish Committee today strongly criticized a section of a Middle East resolution adopted by the Governing Board of the National Council of Churches which called upon the United States Government to "undertake an open dialogue with the PLO" without requiring the PLO to repudiate its announced aims for the violent destruction of Israel.

The AJC reaction was issued here by Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, AJC's national interreligious affairs director, and Rabbi A. James Rudin, assistant director. Rabbi Rudin represented the American Jewish Committee at the NCC Governing Board as an official fraternal observer.

While acknowledging that the NCC resolution contains a number of positive affirmations about Israel and Egypt and the Camp David peace process, the two AJC spokesmen deplored the fact that "this latest resolution contradicts both the spirit and the policy of the NCC's own major 1980 Middle East policy statement. In that declaration, arrived at after more than a year of deliberations and public hearings, the National Council of Churches went on record as urging two preconditions for any governmental dialogue with the PLO, namely, the PLO's 'recognizing Israel as a sovereign state and its right to continue as a Jewish state and ... refrain (ing) from all hostile acts against Israel.' This resolution is an inexplicable departure from that balanced view and can only lend legitimacy to the PLO, the pivotal catalyst for international terrorism - hardly a moral position expected from a major Christian body."

Such unqualified support for the PLO in peace negotiations, the AJC officials said, will only contribute to the hardening of positions and will inhibit the cause of Middle East peace rather than advance it.

While welcoming the NCC's call for an end to the bitter internal conflicts in Lebanon between the various Arab factions, Rabbis Tanenbaum and Rudin

Maynard I Wishner, President, Howard I Friedman, Chairman, Board of Governors, Theodore Ellenoff, Chairman, National Executive Council, Robert L Pelz, Chairman, Board of Trustees Bertram H Gold, Executive Vice President

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stated that "the NCC avoided facing up to the central factors which have brought Lebanon such tragic destruction, namely, the presence on Lebanese soil of numerous foreign, non-Lebanese troops, as well as the illegal presence of Syrian missiles in that country. It would have been a bracing expression of realism had the NCC urged the removal of all foreign troops, including the PLO terrorist armies, and the Syrian missiles and military garrisons which have violated Lebanon's national integrity."

The NCC resolution, Rabbis Tanenbaum and Rudin said, is at the same time, constructive in a number of respects. They welcome the NCC's commendation of Israel for its "difficult and painful withdrawal from Sinai," and its acknowledgment that both Israel and Egypt have demonstrated their commitment to the Camp David peace treaty and to the continuing peace process In addition, the AJC welcomed the NCC's support of the United States government's reaffirmation of Israel's right to "secure, defined and recognized borders."

Nevertheless, Rabbis Tanenbaum and Rudin concluded, the NCC failed in an opportunity to be solidly helpful in dealing with the cutting edge issues of Middle East peace at the heart of which is the PLO's intransigent commitment to violence and terrorism and the refusal of the majority of Arab governments to welcome Israel into the family of nations as a legitimate sovereign state "

Founded in 1906, the American Jewish Committee is this country's pioneer human relations organization It combats bigotry, protects the civil and religious rights of Jews at home and abroad and seeks improved human relations for all people everywhere

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# MAY 15, 1982 NCC Sidesteps One Issue For Others

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National Council of Churches put off for a year the controversial issue of homosexual membership in the inter faith agency and gladly turned to equally controversial, but more famil iar issues

After a 45 minute debate the 260 member Governing Board of the 32 Protestant and Orthodox churches that make up the generally liberal National Council this week voted to defer for one year a vote on whether the homosexual oriented Metropolitan Community Church can be considered eligible for membership

During the year, the council s Com mission on Faith and Order will study the implications of the liny young denomination's ministry to gays and its affirmation that homosevuality "is a gift from God "

The decision to postpone the issue for a year emerged as something of a compromise between those in the council who feared accepting the gay

and others who said the group met all criteria of the council and wanted an immediate vote

"This was a positive vote that indicates the seriousness of our intent to do justice to this question" said United Methodist Bishop James Arm strong, council president

Nancy Wilson codirector of the Metropolitan Community Church said "While disappointed, I feel very posi tive about the process today Anything that keeps the door open is, from our point of view, a victory "

The Metropolitan Community of Churches, with 26 000 members was founded in 1968 in response to the rejection of homosexuals by most churches It began the complicated process of applying for membership in the National Council in September

Following the debate and vote on the MCC, the Governing Board turned to an equally controversial but more familiar area - how to achieve peace

in the Middle East

The National Councils position on the Middle East frequently has been a cause of severe strain between Chris tians and Jews in the United States The board passed a resolution praising Israel and Egypt for their participation in the Camp David peace process and to the surprise of Jewish

observers at the meeting, commending the Israelis for their ditticult and sometimes painful experience" in with drawing from the Sinai

But leaders of the American Jew ish Committee official observers at the meeting, were sharply critical of a portion of the resolution which called on the US government to undertake 'an open dialogue with the Pales tine Liberation Organization as one means of moving toward this goal "

"This resolution can only lend le gitimacy to the PLO the pivotal cata lyst for international terrorism hardly a moral position expected from a ma jor Christian body " the Jewish Com mittee said

In other action

· The council expressed opposi tion to President Reagan's proposed legislation to restore prayer to the public schools

· Spoke out against the 'mass exclusion or deportation of undocu mented workers ' by the US Immigra tion and Naturalization Service

Expressed opposition to the ad ministration's proposal for tuition tax credits for parents who send their children to parochial or private schools

· Urged members to study the issues of racial justice and religious liberty as they relate to the Bob Jones University case pending before the Supreme Court

DOCUMENT

#### DATA SHEET

#### TITLE: RESOLUTION ON THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS

ORIGINATING BODY:

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The Resolution was initiated by the Middle East Committee, DOM, was received by the DOM Executive Committee meeting held on April 23rd, 1982 which voted to authorize an inter-unit group composed of the chairpersons and staff of the Inter-unit Committee on International Concerns, the Advisory Committee on Christian-Jewish Relations, the Task Force on Christian-Muslim Relations and the Middle East Committee, DOM to refine the draft resolution in the context of continuing events in the Middle East, for presentation to the Governing Board Meeting, May 12-14, 1982.

PURPOSE:

Implementation of the Policy Statement on the Middle East.

POLICY BASE:

Policy Statement on the Middle East adopted November,

1980.

DOCUMENT

Resolution On

#### THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS

(Proposed)

1 The faithful conclusion on April 25, 1982 of the first phase of the peace 2 process initiated in "A Framework for Peace in the Middle East Agreed at Camp 3 David" in 1978 was a momentous occasion. Israel has fulfilled its obligation 4 in spite of the difficult and sometimes painful experience related to return-5 ing portions of the occupied Sinai to Egypt. Egypt has continued in its com-6 mitment to peace and its recognition of Israel in spite of criticisms from 7 the Arab world and the assassination of President Sadat. Both Egypt and Israel 8 have demonstrated that negotiation can bring an end to hostilities of long 9 standing in the Middle East.

The Governing Board of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., meeting in Nashville, Tennessee, May 12-14, 1982 reiterates its statement adopted in November 1978 giving thanks for the roles of Israel and Egypt in bringing about the Camp David accords.

Yet this achievement is only a partial realization of the essential comprehensive peace required in the Middle East. Promises made at Camp David to "recognize the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and their just requirements" and to provide a "resolution of the Palestinian problem in all its aspects"<sup>1</sup> remain unfulfilled, yet central to the peace process. Lack of progress on this issue not only prolongs violence and suffering in the Israeli and Palestinian communities but also threatens to plunge Lebanon and other

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21 states of the area into a war which could escalate into a nuclear confronta-22 tion jeopardizing the survival of humanity.

23 The Governing Board expresses again its grief and sorrow over the con-24 tinuing tragedy in Lebanon. It recalls its action of May 15, 1981, recognizing that "much of the fighting on Lebanese soil is being carried on by non-25 Lebanese or at the instigation of non-Lebanese" and reiterates its call to 26 the Government of the United States to "work for a solution to the conflict 27 based upon a reassertion of Lebanese sovereignty over all the land and people 28 of Lebanon."<sup>2</sup> Resolution of the conflict in Lebanon must be pursued as a 29 30 matter of high importance in its own right, even though inextricably linked to the Israel-Palestinian conflict. 31

As negotiating efforts in the Middle East peace process are now to be focused on resolving the Israel-Palestinian conflict, the international community and especially the United States, has the responsibility "to communicate its commitment to the survival of both peoples."<sup>3</sup> This would help reduce the fears which inhibit the taking of the essential next step of the reciprocal recognition by Israel and the Palestinians of each other's right to national self-determination.

Yet, the continuation of the hopeful peace process has been jeopardized by recent actions by the present Government of Israel which seem to be a retreat from the Camp David promises. After having withdrawn from the Sinai, it has announced its intention to pursue aggressively its policy of establishing new Israeli settlements and expanding existing ones on the remaining occupied territories; it has extended Israeli law to the territory of the Golan Heights; it has continued to expropriate Palestinian land on the West Bank

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and Gaza; and it has indicated its intention never again to abandon settle-46 ments or cede occupied territories. Further, the Government of Israel has 47 48 substituted an Israeli civilian administration for the military administration, and has dismissed elected Palestinian officials on the West Bank in an 49 apparent effort unilaterally to impose its own plan for Palestinian autonomy. 50 All these actions, which threaten the prospects of peace including negotia-51 tions on the future status of the occupied territories, give credence to 52 53 Palestinian fears that Israel does not intend to negotiate on the matter of self-determination and plans to annex the remaining historic lands of Pales-54 tine. These actions are provocative to the Palestinians and have also prompted 55 a critical outcry from many Israelis. 56

57 At the same time, the Palestine Liberation Organization has not taken 58 steps which will encourage peace and address the fears of Israelis about long-59 range PLO objectives as spelled out in the Palestine National Covenant. Thus both Israel and the PLO contribute to the gravity of the present situation 60 61 which requires urgent action by the United States Government and the American people who must play a key role in bringing the combatants together in nego-62 63 tiation. That this is feasible is evidenced by the recent ceasefire negotiated in July 1981 between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, 64 albeit through intermediaries. 65

66 Encouraging to those who are committed to peace with justice for both 67 Israelis and Palestinians are the activities of groups in Israel such as 68 "Peace Now," and the increasing number of voices within the Palestinian com-69 munity and the PLO who speak out for peaceful coexistence of Palestinians 70 and Israelis.

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71	Therefore, the Governing Board of the National Council of the Churches			
72	of Christ in the U.S.A.:			
73	1. Calls upon its constituent communions and their members to:			
74	a. act upon their affirmation of the fact that "the importance of the			
75	Middle East imposes a responsibility for prudent and perse-			
76	vering action" and that "what U.S.A. Christians say and do and			
77	think about the problems of the Middle East or what they fail to			
78	do may make the difference between the achievement of jus-			
79	tice and peace or continuing conflict and world-endangering war,"4			
80	b. speak out to the President of the United States, Secretary of State			
81	and to their elected representatives in Congress, in light of the			
82	seriousness of this moment, to work more diligently for a just			
83	settlement of this conflict and for the construction of a peaceful			
84	future for all the peoples of the region,			
85	c. reach out to those in the American Jewish and Arab communities in			
86	our midst in order to promote a prompt and just resolution of the			
87	Israel-Palestinian conflict;			
88	2. Urges the Government of the United States of America to formulate a			
89	new dynamic Middle East policy that:			
90	a. reaffirms the right of the State of Israel to exist within secure,			
91	defined and recognized borders, and affirms the right of the Pales-			
92	tinian people to self-determination,			
93	b. makes evident its commitment to the next stage of the Camp David			
94	process, recognition of "the legitimate rights of the Palestinian			
95	people" and the "resolution of the Palestinian problem in all its aspects," <sup>5</sup> .*			

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96		c.	promotes the goal of mutual recognition between Israel and the	
97	t		representatives of the Palestinian people, and undertakes an open	
98			United States Government dialogue with the Palestinian Liberation	
93		d r	Organization as one means of moving toward this goal,	
100		'. d.	calls upon the Arab States, the PLO, and Israel to abandon hostile	
102		4	rhetoric and provocative actions which inhibit responsible dialogue,	
103			and to make maximum use of diplomatic efforts to achieve a	
104	~ '	•	negotiated peace,	
105		e.	works for substantial reductions in arms transfers both to and	
106			from the Middle East nations. These transfers have grown to an	
107			alarming level in the last decade. The United States should	
108			itself show restraint in its arms sales and transfers to the	
109			region and should engage immediately in discussions with its	
110			European allies and the Soviet Union to ensure a multilateral	
111			approach to such reductions of arms transfers;	
112	3.	Further	urges the Government of the United States of America to reaffirm	
113		its commitment to the independence, unity and territorial integrity		
114		of the Republic of Lebanon as a country where religious pluralism may once		
115		again th	rive.	
116	4.	Requests the General Secretary of the NCCC/USA to communicate this reso-		
117		lution to the President and Secretary of State of the U.S.A., to local and		
311		regional councils of Churches in the U.S.A., to the World Council of		
119		Churches	, and the Middle East Council of Churches, and	
120	5.	Requests the member communions of the NCCC/USA to communicate this resolu-		
121		tion as w	widely as possible to their membership, urging them to act on it	
122		as approp	priate	

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<sup>1</sup>"A Framework for Peace in the Middle East Agreed at Camp David" quoted in "Middle East Policy Statement" adopted by the NCCCUSA Governing Board on November 6, 1980, Appendix V, pp 15b, 16a.

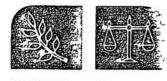
<sup>2</sup>"Resolution on the Conflict in Lebanon" adopted by the NCCCUSA Governing Board on May 15, 1981, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>"Middle East Policy Statement" adopted by the NCCCUSA Governing Board on November 6, 1980, p. 11b.

<sup>4</sup>1bid., p. 1a.

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<sup>5</sup>"A Framework for Peace in the Middle East" as quoted in "Middle East Policy Statement", p. 15b, 16a.



## NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN THE USA



#### **OFFICE ON CHRISTIAN-JEWISH RELATIONS** 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115 (212) 870-2156

James Armstrong President Claire Randall General Secretary

August 17, 1983

From:

David E Simpson Director Landrum Shields

Chairman

To: Some members of the Committee

David Simpson Re: UN Conference on Palestine

Quite recently the decision was made for one of our committee members, George Telford, to attend the United Nations Conference on Palestine which is being held in Geneva, August 29 - September 8, 1983.

As you know, our Committee recommended in March to the General Secretary that the NCC not participate in the Conference. Any NCC representation at this Conference is contrary to our recommendation. Given this adverse outcome, however, it is good that it is George who has been chosen as the NCC observer. His demonstrated and consistent sensitivity to Christian-Jewish relations should enable him to understand and interpret the events at the Conference from an unbiased perspective.

George will be at the March in Washington, DC on Saturday, August 27 and will leave for Geneva directly from there. Those of you who may be attending the March may find a way to see him there. Otherwise I think it would be advisable if you could find the time to call George in Blacksburg, VA (703-552-2504 or 703-951-4698) as soon as possible to share with him some of your concerns about the Conference.

I wish that this decision to send a representative had not been made. This Conference and the NCC's observer participation are now, however, a reality. And I believe that it is important that our concerns are voiced in order that the NCC's representation at this Conference not result in the possible perception of being a "blanket" acceptance of the outcome of the Conference's proceedings.

Thank you for your interest. Call me if you have any questions.

cc: Joan Campbell

enclosures: letter to George Telford 11 St. OF THER BERTHIBST TICH PERTSNATANDELEAL ENCOMENISM Joan B Campbell Assistant General Secretary



## NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRISTIN THEUSA



OFFICE ON CHRISTIAN-JEWISH RELATIONS 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115 (212) 870-2156

August 17, 1983

Landrum Shields Cnairman

Director

David E Simpsor

The following agencies have accepted invitations and will attend the UN Conference on Palestine:

United Presbyterian Church Presbyterian Church in the U.S. United Methodist Church National Council of Churches World Council of Churches Catholic Relief Services Catholic Education Board The Vatican YMCA and YWCA International Save the Children, Sweden OXFAM

Claire Randall General Secretary James Armstrong President





David E Simpson

Landrum Sh elds

**D**.rector

Chairman

## VATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRISTIN THE UCA

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August 17, 1983

The Reverend George Telford Blacksburg Presbyterian Church P.O. Box 144 Blacksburg, Virginia 24060

Dear George:

If the National Council of Churches needs to send an observer to the United Nations Conference on the Question of Palestine being held in Geneva this month, I cannot think of a more qualified representive than yourself. Your participation on the panel that contributed to the development of the NCC Policy Statement on the Middle East and your continued advocacy on behalf of our relations with the Jewish community attest to your convictions.

The NCC Committee on Christian Jewish Relations has articulated its concern about the UN Conference in a resolution adopted at our March, 1983 meeting and sent to the NCC General Secretary. Please see the attached minutes and letter to Claire Randall. We have been repeated advised of the potential the Conference may have for increased tension between ourselves and the Jewish community.

We would like to see your presence at the Conference as one representing the NCC, including the concerns of our Committee. It would be most helpful if you could arrange to meet with a few members of our Committee just prior to your attendence at the Conference, to hear the concerns and to more carefully observe the proceedings at the Conference. I will call you today to see if this can be arranged on your way to Geneva. Thanks for your continued sensitivity.

Sincerely, 1-111

David Simpson Director

cc: Joan Campbell, Claire Randall Dwain Epps, A. James Armstrong

## THE OFFICE ON CHRISTIAN-JEWISH RELATIONS OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

#### PROGRESS -REPORT

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December 1981

prepared by

The Reverend David Simpson

Director

#### NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES OF CHRIST

#### COMMITTEE ON CHRISTIAN JEWISH RELATIONS

**PROGRESS REPORT - DECEMBER 1981** 

The purpose of this report is to summarize the activities of the Office on Christian Jewish Relations of the NCCC and to inform denominational executives and other supporting agencies of the goals and directions of the Office and its programs.

Created as an Office of the General Secretary of the NCC in 1973, the Committee on Christian Jewish Relations became administratively related to the Commission on Regional and Local Ecumenism in 1979, thereby finding its first program agency home in the NCC. Under the concerned leadership of the Rev. Joan B. Campbell, Director of the CORLE Commission, the Office on Christian Jewish Relations sought financial support to secure full time professional staff to replace the Rev. William B. Weiler, who resigned in 1979. With the assistance of NCC member denominations, supportive churches, such as the German Church, and a foundation grant, the Office was able to employ a full time Director for one year beginning April 1, 1981.

The task of the one year assignment was to develop a new program in Christian Jewish Relations and to organize constituancy support for the Office and its Committee. A Prospectus for the Committee is attached which lists specific short term activities and long range goals. The Committee has increased in size and diversity and has met on April 2, June 8, September 8 and November 17 of 1981.

At the April 2 meeting, the Committee accepted the recommendation of Joan Campbell to appoint the Rev. David Simpson to a one year special assignment as Director of the Office on Christian Jewish Relations effective April 1, 1981. Mr. Simpson took a leave of absence and agreed to be "on loan" from the Association of Religious Communities in Danbury, Connecticut, where he served as Director for eight years. The first two months of this assignment were occupied with establishing relationships with Christian and Jewish leaders working in the field and becoming acquainted with the current issues and activities in Christian Jewish relations At the June 8 meeting of the Committee, the following timetable for the one year assignment was verbally presented and adopted

FIRST QUARTER April 1 - June 30, 1981

- Identify and make contact with leadership in the field of Christian Jewish relations from the NCCC constituent community, including committee members, denominational leaders, the Middle East Desk, the Christian Muslim Task Force and the Commission on Faith and Order.
- 2. Identify and make contact with leadership in the Jewish community working in the field of Christian Jewish relations.
- Identify and make contact with other agencies, offices and programs contributing to the work of Christian Jewish relations, such as
  - National Conference of Christians and Jews
  - National Committee on Soviet Jewry (Solidarity Day)
    - Voice of Reason
  - Unitarian Universalist Association
  - Israel Interfaith Committee
  - Middle East Peace Project
- 4. Become acquainted with issues, concerns and stated positions in the field of Christian Jewish relations, including those related to the Middle East conflict.
- Identify programs and resources currently available and active in Christian Jewish relations, including the work of interfaith agencies and ecumenical councils in local communities.
- Develop plan for increasing constituency support for the Ôffice on Christian Jewish Relations, including Committee membership and financial resources.
- Begin planning prgrams to be carried out in cooperation with local communities, interfaith councils, Jewish agencies and other, including seminars on Middle East understanding.

SECOND QUARTER July 1 - September 30, 1981

- Strengthen relationships with leadership in the NCCC constituency, the Jewish community and other active in the field.
- Strengthen the Committee on Christian Jewish Relations, including personal contact with its membership
- 3. Establish mechanism to request additional financial support for the Office on Christian Jewish Relations, make formal contact with denominations.

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- 4. Research additional potential funding sources for the Office and its programs.
- 5. Review and analyze materials, resources, programs and positions in the field.
- 6. Identify and confirm program priorities for the Committee and its relationship with the NCCC constituency, the Jewish community, local councils and others.
- 7. Develop Guidelines for the Committee, its membership, its functions and its operation.

THIRD QUARTER October 1 - December 31, 1981

- Finalize planning, develop and implement programs on Middle East understanding in at least two cities (Danbury, Ct. and Portland, Or.).
- 2. Finalize funding commitments from denominations for Office on Christian Jewish Relations for 1982 budget.
- 3. Develop additional funding sources
- 4. Confirm expanded membership on Committee.
- Develop and carry out additional programs as planned or identified in second quarter, including programs in Danbury, Ct.
- 6. Conduct at least one major forum with the Synagogue Council of America.
- 7. Plan and carry out consultation between Committee leadership and Synagogue Council leadership.
- 8. Plan joint consultation between American Jewish Committee and CORLE/Interfaith Agencies leadership.
- 9. Continue strengthening relations with NCCC denominations and other agencies.
- 10. Establish planning committees for Middle East understanding programs in Cleveland and Atlanta.
- 11. Prepare 1982 program priorities and plans.

FOURTH QUARTER January 1 - March 30, 1982

- Carry out Middle East understanding programs in Cleveland and Atlanta.
- 2. Carry out consultation with American Jewish Committee.
- 3. Conduct at least one major forum with the Synagogue Council of America.
- .4. Make recommendations to the NCCC Governing Board and CORLE regarding future programs and priorities of the Office on Christian Jewish Relations.
- 5. Make recommendations concerning the future and permanent staffing for the Office on Christian Jewish Relations.
- 6. Continue cooperative programs with denominations and other agencies as planned.

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The above timetable is being adhered to as much as possible and the following activities and program proposals have been executed:

- ADL Seminar on Jews and Judaism The Director was introduced to current theological perspectives in Christian Jewish relations at the Seminar which took place on April 6-9, 1981, at Princeton University. Approximately forty academic and biblical scholars, clergy and professionals in the field joined ADL national staff to engage in dialogue on such issues as Israel, New Testament studies and Jewish history.
- 2. Yom Hashoah (Holocaust Memorial) Service

The first official program responsibility of the new Director was to organize and conduct Holocaust Memorial Service on April 30, 1981, at the Interchurch Center in New York City. A service of worship previously designed by staff from the National Conference of Christians and Jews was adopted and used with leaders of Christian denominations, Jewish agencies and NCC staff participating.

A delegation of National Jewish Agency staff joined denominational leaders and Committee members for a luncheon following the service to introduce the new Director of the Office on Christian Jewish Relations.

3. National Workshop on Christian Unity.

More than 400 ecumenical professionals and religious leaders attended the three day meeting in Boston, Mass., on May 4-7, 1981. Fr. Henri Nouwen offered the keynote address, calling for an openness to the spirit in new ecumenical endeavors. Joan Campbell and David Simpson led a worksop on interfaith relations, at which the work of local interfaith councils was discussed. Byron Haines, Director of the NCC Task Force on Chrstian Muslim Relations, led a workshop on Islam, at which he reviewed the elements of the encounter between Islam and Christianity that must be taken seriously by Western Christians.

4. La Grange II Conference

The first LaGrange Conference held in May, 1979, in LaGrange Illinois, created a great deal of unrest between Christians and Jews due to the pro-Palestinian and anti-Israel Declaration that resulted and was endorsed by a large number of prominant Christian leaders in the United States. The Director of the Christian Jewish Relations Office of the NCC joined approximately 100 participants -- 20 pro-Arab advocates, 30 speakers and workshop leaders and 50 observers. Almost none of the prominant personalities listed as sponsors or endorsers were in attendence at either LaGrange I or II Most of the presentations were quite balanced as to the rights of both Israelis and Palestinians, especially Fr. Chacour, . Wes Michaelson, Rabbi Wolfe, John Yoder, Fr. John Szura, Fr. Bryan Hehir, Dr. J. Lowrey. A few strong, anti-Israel positions were not well received. A consensus emerged that

the report whould reflect the balanced nature of the presentations and the participants at the conference Almost no Jews were present.

A briefing session at the NCC with Jewish leaders and conference participants was held May 27, 1981, and it was concluded that the draft Declaration II was not reflective of the conference. Concern was raised about the process of using names of persons not actually partipating to endorse one-sided statement as drafted by pro-Arab leadership. The Director and participants agreed to review the statement if published and respond according to this concern for legitimacy and balance. The LaGrange II Declaration was reviewed at the September 8, 1981 meeting of the Committee and it was agreed not to give it further visibility with either a response or further circulation. It was also agreed to encourage denominational leaders not to to endorse the Declaration.

#### 5. NCCC Spring Governing Board Meeting

The May 10-15 1981 Governing Board Meeting was held in Philadelphia, Pa., and coincided with the CORLE Commission meeting. The CORLE Commission received a report from Joan Campbell and David Simpson on the progress and plans for the one year assignment. The Commission voted to commend the effort, particularly in relation to increased work with interfaith councils and the Jewish community. The Commission also voted to increase collaboration between itself and the Committee on Christian Jewish Relations by naming two CORLE members to the Committee and two Committee members to CORLE.

Lonnie Turnipseed, Chairman of the Committee, hosted an Interfaith Breakfast at the Governing Board Meeting on Friday, May 15 1981 to which more than 50 denominational leaders came to hear brief reports on the work of the Committee and the Task Force on Christian Muslim Relations of the NCC. Interfaith Conference reported on ways in which Christians, Jews and Muslims have established a formal working relationship through that agency It is one of three fully interreligious councils in the U.S., the others being in Buffalo, N.Y., and Berkeley, Ca.

#### 6. Consultations in Oregon and California

On June, 11-13, 1981, the Director participated in a series of meetings in Portland, Oregon, upon the invitation of the State Council, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon. Rabbi Mark Tanenbaum, National Director of the American Jewish Committee, joined in the sessions with Jewish and Christian leaders to discuss a long-term evalution process to determine the future formal relationships between the Jewish community and the Ecumenical Council. The Director also met with EMO Executive Council members to propose that Portland be one location for a Seminar on the Middle East to be sponsored by EMO and the NCC. This request was subsequently approved by EMO. On June 16-17, 1981, the Director met with leadership of the Berkeley Interfaith Council and Robert McAfee Brown in Palo Alto, California to discuss possible programs and future involvement in activities of the Office on Christian Jewish Relations.

7. Unitarian Universalist General Assembly.

The Director was invited to conduct a seminar on Christian Jewish Relations at the UUA Annual Meeting on June 18, 1981 in Philadelphia. An update on the Office was given and a proposal was made to sponsor a seminar on the Middle East through the UUA. It was further suggested that a formal dialogue be established between the UUA and the Office on Christian Jewish Relations. The Director has been invited to present a seminar on the Middle East at the June, 1982, Unitarian Universalist General Assembly in Maine.

δ. International Conference of Christians and Jews

Several hundred of the world's top scholars and leaders in Christian Jewish relations met in Heppenheim, West Germany, on June 27 - July 2, 1981. The Director attended the session which included a compact agenda with excellent presentations on the current status of religious education concerns in the field of Christian Jewish relations. Opportunity was presented to strengthen relationships and discuss program commitments with Marc Tanenbaum, Eugene Fisher, Paul Van Buren and John Pawlikowski. Financing for the trip to West Germany was provided by special grants from the United Church of Christ.

9. National Association of Ecumenical Staff

This organization, of which the Director is an active member, brings together approximately one hundred ecumenical and interfaith executives of local and state councils from across the United States every summer for one week of professional development, spiritual growth and personal support. The 1981 Conference was held in Bethany, West Virginia, July 9-14, with Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum as the keynote speaker and Inge Lederer Gibel of the American Jewish Committee as a primary workshop leader. Important groundwork was accomplished toward cooperative programs with local councils, particularily in the areas of Middle East understanding and Black Jewish relations.

10. September 8, 1981, Meeting of the Committee

Fifteen members, staff and guests of the Committee met in New York City to accept a full report from the Director, approve the assignment of two seminary students to conduct their field work with the Office and to adopt a new set of Guidelines for the Committee. The Guidelines (copy attached) call for a dramatic restructuring and increase in the membership of the Committee. Each member and cooperating denomination will now have two representatives on the Committee and five national Jewish agencies have agreed to assign representatives as non-voting members of the Committee. All Jewish representatives have become active and denominations are currently selecting representatives for the 1982-1984 trienniem.

#### 11. Meeting with Prime Minister Begin

Ten Protestant and Catholic religious leaders, including the Director of the Office, met with the Prime Minister Menachem Begin under the auspicies of the National Christian Leadership Conference for Israel during his brief visit in New York on September 13, 1981, in his private hotel suite. The group was cordially received and an expression of commitment to the State of Israel from Christian leaders was emphasized. The meeting was scheduled to provide a balance in Christian religious contact with the Prime Minister after his well publicized meeting with Jerry Falwell of the Moral Majority.

#### 12. Consultation with Buffalo, New York

The Director and Byron Haines, Director of the Task Force on Christian Muslim Relations of the NCC, met with the staff and Borad of Directors of the Buffalo Area Metropolitan Ministries (BAMM) on September 16-17, 1981, to discuss the implications of Jewish Christian and Muslim membership in local councils. BAMM has full representation and is beginning to plan cooperative programs on issues agreed upon by all faith communities. te visit also provided the opportunity to meet with staff of the Buffalo Area Council of Churches to discuss joint agency prgramming and the possible co-sponsorship of a seminar on the Middle East in Buffalo. The Director also met in Buffalo with the Rev. Tom Stewart, United Presbyterian pastor and President of the American Friends for Nes Ammim.

#### 13. Second National PIE Conference

The CORLE sponsored Partners in Ecumenism (PIE) Conference brought together more than two hundred Black church leaders from across the United States in Wasington, DC, on September 23-25, 1981, to discuss major issues facing the Black community in the 1980's. The Director of the Office on Christian Jewish Relations and Inge Gibel of the American Jewish Committee met informally with Black leaders to discuss common concerns and to examine the status of Black Jewish relations. Many individuals expressed a desire to develop a format for ongoing Black Jewish dialogue to explore such topics as the Middle East and coalition building around public issues.

#### 14. New Staff for CORLE Office

Lois Hill, Secretary to the CORLE Office and the Office on Christian Jewish Relaions, resigned in July, 1981, to return to Turkey with her husband. She was replaced in October, 1981, by Ann Wheaton who joined the staff full time with sixty percent of her time assigned to Christian Jewish Relations. Ms. Wheaton has training in theological education, is fluent in German, and has worked in community organization. She is a much needed and welcome addition to the CORLE and Christian Jewish staff.

#### 15. National Christian Leadership Conference for Israel

Approximately one hundred Christian leaders met in Whasington, D.C. on October 14-15, 1981, to rally support among Christians for Israel. Many evangelical Christians were present to express their strong concern for Israel. In some instances, fundamentalist language created discomfort among liberal Christians, as well as did the presence of "Messianic Jews". This did not take away from the clear fact of growing support among Christians for the security of the State of Israel.

#### 16. Sixth National Workshop on Christian Jewish Relations

The NCC Office on Christian Jewish Relations is one of three national sponsors of the Workshop which has met every eighteen months since its inception by Catholics in Jews in Dayton, Ohio, ten years ago. Lonnie Turnipseed represented the NCC in planning the Workshop, which attracted more than six hundred persons to Milwaukee in October 26-29, 1981. The dramatic increase in participation of Catholics, Jews and Protestants at the Milwaukee Workshop clearly establishes this ongoing event as the major national forum to promote Christian Jewish relations in the U.S. The Director of the Office presented a paper on the current status and future of Christian Jewish relations in America at the conclusion of the Conference.

#### 17. NCC Fall Governing Board Meeting and the EVENT

Held in Cleveland, Ohio, on November 3-7, 1981, the Governing Board meeting again provided the occasion for the meeting of the CORLE Commission. At the Governing Board Meeting religious leaders decisively rejected a proposed resolution to support the peace plan being promoted by Saudi Arabia, which is considered to be most negative toward the State of Israel. This action resulted in a press release from the American Jewish Committee welcoming and praising the firm stand of the NCC Governing Board, backed by its Policy Statement on the Middle East.

The CORLE Commission members set priorites for program goals for the new trieniem, and in every instance Christian Jewish Relations was given a high priority ranking The Rev. Ellis Casson, the newly elected Chairman of CORLE, highly rated the work of christian Jewish relations as one of CORLE's priorities for the future.

Following the Governing Board Meeting 1,500 Christians came together in Cleveland for two days to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the NCC. Billed as the <u>EVENT</u>, it provided an opportunity for sharing a past and presenting a vision for the future of ecumenical life. A Seminar on Other Living Faiths attracted approximately 50 denominational leaders, an indication of growing interest in this aspect of the ecumenical movement.

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#### 18. Israel Study Group.

The Director of the Office was honored to be invited to join a small delegation of top academic scholars on November 13-14, 1981, in Garrison, New York under the auspices of the National Conference of Christians and Jews. A paper by Paul Van Buren of Temple University was presented concerning a possible Christian theology of Israel. The recently adopted World Council of Churches Guidelines on Christian Jewish Dialogue were also examined, and a response was prepared for the WCC. The next meeting of the Group was set for April, 1982, and the Director of the Office was asked to prepare a report on the Seminar on the Middle East currently being held in Danbury, Connecticut. Jonathan Currier, a field work student for the Office from Union Theological Seminary, was also in attendance and is preparing a report of the November 1981 meeting.

#### 19. November 17, 1981, Meeting of the Committee

Twenty-two members and staff of the Committee on Christian Jewish Relations met in New York City to elect a Chairperson, discuss program activities and welcome new members to the Committee. Five Jewish agencies were represented at the meeting, which added a new dimension to the discussion. The Rev. Landrum Shields, pastor of a United Presbyterian Church in Indianapolis, Indiana, was elected Chairman. Cynthia Bronson of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, Clarke Lobenstine of the Washington (D.C.) Interfaith Conference and Martha Miller of the Dutchess (N.Y.) Interfaith Council were elected to membership on the Committee. The Committee also voted to name a search committee in January 1982 to select permanent professional staff for the Office on Christian Jewish Relations.

#### REPORTS OF ONGOING ACTIVITIES AND PROPOSED PROGRAMS

#### 1. Christian Jewish Forums with the Synagogue Council of America

The Forums, which have been co-sponsored by the NCC and the Synagogue Council for several years, conducted one session on June 18, 1981, at the Interchurch Center on New York City The topic of Christian and Jewish Perspectives on the United Nations and its role with respect to Israel generated heated debate and was moderated by Lonnie Turnipseed.

All parties involved agree that the Forums should be continued. The Director has met with members of the Synogogue Council to discuss future sessions and to consider other cooperative programs. Cynthia Bronson of the NCCJ has agreed to serve on a committee to reactivate the Forums and to organize future sessions. She will be joined by members of the NCC Committee and representatives of the Synagogue Council An early Spring 1982 date is anticipated for the next Forum

#### 2. Seminar on the Middle East

At the end of 1980, the NCC received a \$39,600 grant from the George Gund Foundation of Cleveland, Ohio, thus enabling the Office of Christian Jewish Relations and the NCC Middle East Desk to develop a series of educational seminars on the Middle East for selected cities across the United States This grant, shared between CORLE and the Middle East Desk, made it possible for the Office on Christian Jewish Relations to secure the full time services of David Simpson as Director.

The grant proposed meetings in Atlanta, Cleveland and Los Angeles, bringing together Jews, Christians and Muslims with top community leadership to increase understanding of Middle East conflict and its origins. The anticipated outcome was a more educated and sensitive community with regard to the complex issues surrounding U.S. policy and involvement in the Middle East.

The Director of the Office of Christian Jewish Relations made contact with religious leaders in more than ten cities to determine the level of interest and support for co-sponsoring such a seminar. The grant was revised to include Cleveland, Atlanta, Portland, and Danbury (CT) as locations for developing a pilot program. A five part series was concluded on December 13, 1981, in Danbury with an average attendance of more than seventy-five persons at each session. Copies of the program are attached to this report. Following a complete evaluation of the pilot program, which was considered by participants to be extremely valuable, the Seminar will be formally proposed in Cleveland, Atlanta and Portland. Planning meetings have been held in Portland and Cleveland

Other cities under consideration for a continuation and expansion of this project in 1982 include Detroit, Michigan, Buffalo, New York, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Washington, D C., Los Angeles and San Francisco, California, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Boston, Massachusetts. In each case the Seminar will be proposed as a project to be co-sponsored by local interfaith and ecumenical agencies as well as local churches and synagogues.

#### 3. Employment of Seminary Students

As program activities expanded in scope, it became clear that the Office on Christian Jewish Relations needed additional staff to fulfill its expected objectives. The Director contacted Union Theological Seminary (UTS) and Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) to request student placements with the Office on Christian Jewish Relations as field work assignments. Jonathan Currier, first year student at UTS, was assigned in October, 1981, to a fifteen hour/week assignment through the college work study program. Sam Weintraub first year student at JTS, was assigned to an internship to to begin officially in January 1982 under the sponsorship of the American Jewish Committee. The students are being supervised by David Simpson and are assigned to specific research and program development activities They will make an important contribution to the Office and its programs throughout the academic.year.

#### 4. Seminary Education Project

The Director of the Office identified a need to assess the extent to which issues in Christian Jewish relations are being taught in theological seminaries in the United States, based on the apparent lack of such resources at seminaries with which he had had personal contact. Initial research determined that Dr. Eugene Fisher, Secretariat for Catholic Jewish Relations of the U.S. Catholic Conference, has proposed a draft curriculum on Christian Jewish relations to be co-sponsored in its publication and distribution by the American Jewish Committee. At its meeting on September 8, 1981, the Committee on Christian Jewish Relations agreed to cooperate with this project to include selected Protestant seminaries in a pilot program. The field work students will update research on existing programs in seminary curricula and will encourage seminaries to engage in a program to promote the use of teaching materials on issues in Christian Jewish relations among Catholic, Jewish and Protestant theological schools in the United States.

#### 5. Educational Materials on Jerusalem

The Anti-Defamation League requested that the Office on Christian Jewish Relations provide assistance in the distribution of copies of the ADL publication <u>The Record</u>, a special issue on Jerusalem, which became available in September 1981. A copy is attached to this report The Committee agreed at its September meeting to seek the assistance of the NCC Middle East Desk and the NCC Task Force on Christian Muslim Relations to develop a packet of material on Jerusalem for wide distribution to local churches through the denominations, of which the ADL publication will be a central part This project is being carried out with the assistance of the seminary students.

#### 6. The American Jewish Committee/CORLE Consultation

Selected executives from ten interfaith and ecumenical councils in the CORLE/NAES membership met with leadership of the American Jewish Committee in New York City in April, 1980, to share common conerns and to develop a closer working relationship. A follow-up meeting was requested and on January 5 and 6 of 1982 a second major consultation will be held in Haverford, Pennsylvania, with fifteen representatives of each group attending, including ecumenical executives from Buffalo, Pittsburgh, Washington, D.C., New York City, Philadelphia and several other cities in New York, Connecticut and Rhode Island. The agenda will include an update on activities and problems in efforts to increase the encounter between Jews and Christians at the local level as well as a discussion of liberation theology and its implications for Christians and Jews. Fr. John Pawlikowski of Chicago and Dr. Paul Van Buren of Temple University will offer presentations on the Christian view of liberation theology. 1

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#### 7. Publcations in the Journal of Ecumenical Studies

Dr. Leonard Swidler, Editor of the Journal, has invited the Office on Christian Jewish Relations and the Secretariat for Catholic Jewish Relations to cooperate in the submission of reports and articles to JES on a regular basis. Ten additional pages will be made available in each issue to report on local projects and new activities in Christian Jewish relations and feature articles will be sought for review and publication in the Journal. This new activity will be assisted by the seminary students and should provide an important communication network for the work being done in Christian Jewish relations.

#### 8. Training for Religious Educators

One of the projects being initiated in Dabury, Connecticut, before the Director was assigned to the NCC was an inservice training program in Christian Jewish relations for church school educators in local churches and synangogues. This project is currently being developed as a model program with the co-sponsorship of the American Jewish Committee and will be carried out as four one-day sessions involving ten churches and synagogues in the Danbury area during the spring of 1982. Leadership will be provided by Harriet Kaufman of Cincinnati, Ohio, and staff from the U.S. Catholic Conference, the Anti-Defamation League and the American Jewish Committee. Upon evaluation, the program will be offered to local chruches and synagogues through interfaith agencies in cities across the United States.

#### 9. WCC Guidelines for Jewish Christian Dialogue

The Consultation on the Church and the Jewish People of the World Council of Churches adopted an in depth set of Guidelines for Dialogue at their meeting in London on June 26, 1981. Joan Campbell and two members of the Committee on Christian Jewish Relations (Lonnie Turnipseed and William Harter) participated in the London meeting. The Guidelines were reviewed by the Committee at its November 17, 1981, meeting where it was recommended that a proposal be developed in early 1982 for the distribution and study of the Guidelines by local congregations, denominations and interfaith agencies The Office on Christian Jewish Relations will give priority to this task as a means of promoting and increasing understanding of the key issues in Christian Jewish dialogue among Christians in the United States.

#### THE COMMITTEE ON CHRISTIAN JEWISH RELATIONS

#### of the

#### NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN THE USA

#### **1981 PROSPECTUS**

#### BACKGROUND

The Office of Christian Jewish Relations was established in 1973 under the Office of the General Secretary of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Initial funding for the Office was provided by a grant from the Lilly endowment. The Office had an Advisory Committee to help guide its work. In 1979, that Office was placed administratively in the Commission on Regional and Local Ecumenism of the NCCC with a Committee on Christian Jewish Relations. The program in Christian Jewish Relations will continue prior activities and will place a new emphasis on working with interfaith councils across-the United States through the CORLE network.

#### RATIONALE

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Because of the inescapable and often tragic intertwining of the history of Christian and Jews, and because fifty per cent of all Jews live in the United States, it is urgent that the National Council of Churches and its member communions provide a structural means to foster dialogue and cooperation between Jews and Christians. Further, Christians need to be made aware of the common roots of the Church and the Jewish people in sacred scriptures, in the prophetic visions of social justice and universal peace, and in beliefs about God. Relationships between Christians and Jews have been marred by a shameful history of Christian anti-semitism, by misunderstanding and mistrust of each other. To be faithful to our own basic beliefs, to strengthen the moral heritage of our society, and to help our churches and nation to deal with the complex issues of the Middle East, Christian Jewish understanding and cooperation is essential. To build these important interfaith relationships between major Jewish organizations and the thirty-three member communions of the National Council of Churches and to serve as a resource for interfaith councils across the United States in the area of Christian Jewish relations is the task of the Committee and its Office.

#### FUNCTIONS OF THE COMMITTEE AND ITS STAFF

- To establish and strengthen relationships between the Council and the Jewish community and to serve as a forum and meeting ground where Jews and Christians can meet and share common concerns.
- To assist and encourage Jews and Christians to engage in dialogue and cooperation through advocacy and by providing information and human resources to assist in these efforts.
- 3. To encourage and facilitate relationships and cooperative action between representative bodies of the Jewish community and units of the NCC and the denominations related to the NCC.
- 4. To develop an overview and a long range strategy in Christian Jewish relations that is based on explicit goals, that has assessed the available resources, and that has developed a plan and a program to reach those goals.
- 5. To relate to the Middle East Desk and the Christian-Muslim Task Force in the NCC for the purpose of advancing understanding between Christians, Muslims and Jews in the USA.
- 6. To serve as a liaison with existing programs in Christian Jewish relations of the denominations related to the NCC
- 7. To coordinate communication of information about and concerns in Christian Jewish relations, to collect and disseminate information about the conversations, dialogues, consultations, seminars, persons and programs in Christian Jewish relations.
- 8. To serve as liaison and, when requested, as facilitator for working groups made up of those interested and concerned with special issues, items of strategy, theological and other research, study and action.
- 9. To serve as a resource for interfaith councils as requested.

- 10. To serve as a resource for the General Secretary of the NCC and for the Executive Committee and the Governing Board of the NCC.
- 11. To provide a point of contact for the World Council of Churches Committee on the Church and the Jewish people.

#### PARTICULAR FOCAL POINTS FOR 1981

In 1981, the following will be the particular focus in the work of the Committee and its staff

- Conducting in cooperation with the Middle East Desk and the Christian-Muslim Task Force, major forums on the Middle East for Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders in Atlanta, Cleveland, Danbury CT and Portland, Oregon.
- Developing a functioning network with a regular newsletter and resource training opportunities among the forty major regional and local interfaith agencies in the USA.
- 3. Planning and implementing, in cooperation with the Synagogue Council of America, several Jewish Christian forums.
- 4. Hosting two joint events with the American Jewish Committee for interfaith agencies.
- 5. Preparing and distributing a sample Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Memorial) service for use in local communities.
- Interpreting issues related to the Middle East through use of <u>The Middle East Panel Report A Study Document</u> and other materials of the National Council of Churches.
- 7. Planning the 1981 and the 1983 National Christian Jewish Workshop.

### SPONSORING ORGANIZATION

The Committee on Christian Jewish Relations is a Committee of the National Council of Churches, administratively related through the Commission on Regional and Local Ecumenism.

For Additional Information Please contact

The Rev. David Simpson, Director Office on Christian Jewish Relations National Council of Churches 475 Riverside Drive New York, New York 10115 (212) 870-2158 The Rev. Joan Campbell, Assistant General Secretary for Regional and Local Ecumenism

National Council of Churches 475 Riverside Drive New York, New York 10115 (212) 870-2155



### NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN THE U S A.

### COMMITTEE ON CHRISTIAN JEWISH RELATIONS

### COMMITTEE GUIDELINES

### I PURPOSES AND FUNCTIONS

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- A To establish and strengthen relationships between the Council and the Jewish community and to serve as a forum and meeting ground where Jews and Christians can meet and share common concerns
- B. To assist and encourage Jews and Christians to engage in dialogue and cooperation through advocacy and by providing information and human resources to assist in these efforts.
- C To encourage and facilitate relationships and cooperative action between representative bodies of the Jewish community and units of the NCCC and the denominations related to the NCCC
- D To relate to the Faith and Order Commission of the NCCC in developing theological perspectives on Christian-Jewish relations, and in exploring the implications of Christian-Jewish relations for Christian theology.
- E To develop an overview and a long range strategy in Christian-Jewish relations that is based on explicit goals, that has assessed the available resources, and that has developed a plan and a program to reach those goals
- F To serve as a liaison with existing programs in Christian-Jewish relations of the denominations related to the NCCC
- G To coordinate communication of information about and concerns in Christian-Jewish relations, to collect and disseminate information about conversations, dialogues, consultations, seminars, persons and programs in Christian-Jewish relations
- H To serve as liaison and, when requested, as facilitator for working groups made up of those interested and concerned with special issues, items of strategy, theological and other research, study and action
- I To serve as a resource for interfaith and ecumenical councils as requested.
- J To serve as a recource for the General Secretary of the NCCC and for the Executive Committee and the Governing Board of the National Council of Churches
- K To provide a point of contact for the World Council of Churches Committee on the Church and the Jewish People

L To relate to the Middle East desk and the Christian-Muslim Task Force in the NCCC for the purpose of advancing understanding among Christians, Muslims, and Jews in the U S A

# II AFFILIATION

- A The Committee on Christian Jewish Relations is an official Committee of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U S A
- B The Committee is administratively located in the Commission on Regional and Local Ecumenism (CORLE) of the NCCC As such the Office on Christian Jewish Relations is part of the CORLE Commission budget and its Rules of Organization shall conform to the CORLE Commission

### III. MEMBERSHIP

A Voting Members

- 1 Two representatives designated by each member denomination of the NCCC
- 2 Two representatives each from any non-NCCC member denomination choosing to participate in the work of the Committee on Christian Jewish Relations subject to the approval of the Committee
- 3 Two representatives designated by the Commission on Faith and Order of the NCCC
- 4 Two representatives designated by the Commission on Regional and Local Ecumenism of the NCCC
- 5 Two persons representing local interfaith or ecumenical councils, upon invitation of the Committee
- B Non-voting Members
  - 1 Representatives of selected Jewish agencies having offices or programs in interfaith relations, upon invitation of the Committee
  - 2 Consultants, upon invitation of the Committee
  - 3 Individuals requesting membership on the Committee, subject to the approval of the Committee
  - 4 Ex-officio members, including the NCCC General Secretary, the Associate General Secretaries of the Commission on Regional and Local Ecumenism and the Commission on Faith and Order and the Directors of the NCCC Middle East Desk and the NCCC Task Force on Christian Muslim Relations

### IV. OFFICERS

A The Officers of the Committee shall be a Chairperson and a

Vice Chairperson elected from among the voting members of the Committee

- B Officers shall be elected at the beginning of each triennium and shall serve for a term of three years.
- C Officers shall be nominated by the Nominating Committee of the Committee on Christian Jewish Relations

### V ACCOUNTABILITY

The Committee shall be accountable to the NCCC Governing Board through the Commission on Regional and Local Ecumenism (CORLE)

### VI STANDING COMMITTEE

- A There shall be a Standing Committee consisting of the Chairperson, the Vice Chairperson and three additional voting members of the Committee, nominated by the Chairperson and approved by the Committee, for a term of one year
- B Ex-officio members of the Standing Committee without vote shall include the Director of the Committee, the Director of the NCCC Middle East Desk and the Director of the NCCC Task Force on Christian Muslim Relations
- C The Chairperson of the Committee shall chair the Standing Committee
- D Three voting members of the Standing Committee shall constitute a quorum
- E. The Standing Committee shall work with the Director of the Committee in the implementation of programs, projects and other actions of the Committee, but shall initiate no new programs. The Standing Committee shall assist the Director in developing responses to crises which may arise between meetings of the Committee It shall report its activities to the regular meetings of the Committee

### VII OTHER COMMITTEES

Sub-committees on Finance, nominating, and other appropriate concerns of the Committee shall be appointed by the Chairperson as necessary, subject to the approval of the Committee

### VIII EXECUTIVE STAFF

The policies and program established by the Committee shall be carried out by the Director of the Committee, The Director of the Committee is responsible administratively to the Associate General Secretary of CORLE and programatically responsible to the Committee The Director of the Committee shall be selected by a Search Committee named by the Committee, and including one representative from CORLE

### IX MEETINGS

The Committee shall normally meet at least three times a year An executive session of the Committee, consisting of only the voting

members, may be called at the discretion of the Officers of the Committee and in accordance with the rules of the NCCC At all meetings, a quorum shall consist of one-third of the voting members

### X AMENDMENTS

These Rules of Organization may be amended at any regular meeting of the Committee, provided that the proposed amendments have first been approved by either the Standing Committee or a full meeting of the Committee and then distributed to all members at least one month prior to the meeting at which they are to be voted upon



# GUIDELINES FOR JEWISH-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE

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Adopted by the Consultation on the Church and the Jewish People of the sub-unit on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies, World Council of Churches, on 26th June, 1981, at London Colney, England

### PREFACE

1.1 "One of the functions of dialogue is to allow participants to describe and witness to their faith in their own terms. This is of primary importance since self-serving descriptions of other peoples' faith are one of the roots of prejudice, stereotyping, and condescension. Listening carefully to the neighbours' self-understanding enables Christians better to obey the commandment not to bear false witness against their neighbours, whether those neighbours be of long established religious, cultural or ideological traditions or members of new religious groups. It should be recognized by partners in dialogue that any religion or ideology claiming universality, apart from having an understanding of itself, will also have its own interpretations of other religions and ideologies as part of its own self-understanding. Dialogue gives an opportunity for a mutual questioning of the understanding partners have about themselves and others. It is out of a reciprocal willingness to listen and learn that significant dialogue grows."

(WCC Guidelines on Dialogue, III.4)

- 1.2 In giving such guidelines the World Council of Churches speaks primarily for and to its member churches as it defines the need for and gifts to be received by dialogue. People of other faiths may choose to define their understanding of dialogue, and their expectations as to how dialogue with Christians may affect their own traditions and attitudes and may lead to a better understanding of Christianity.
- 1.3 In Jewish-Christian dialogue it is of special importance to allow for a certain asymmetry between these two communities of faith. For example, an understanding of Judaism in New Testament times becomes an integral and indispensable part of any Christian theology. For Jews, a "theological understanding of Christianity is of a less than essential or integral significance, although neither community of faith has developed without awareness of the other.
- 1.4 The relations between Jews and Christians have unique characteristics because of the ways in which Christianity historically emerged out of Judaism. Christian understandings of that process constitute a necessary part of the dialogue and give urgency to the enterprise. As Christianity came to define its own identity over against Judaism, the Church developed its own understandings, definitions and terms for what it had inherited from Jewish traditions, and for what it read in the Scriptures common to Jews and Christians. In the process of defining its own identity the Church defined Judaism, and assigned to the Jews definite roles in its understanding of God's acts of salvation. It should not be surprising that Jews resent those Christian theologies in which they as a people are assigned to play a negative role. History has demonstrated over and again how short the step is from such patterns of thought in Christianity to over acts of condescension, persecutions and worse.

- 1.5 Bible-reading and worshipping Christians often believe that they "know Judaism" since they have the Old Testament, the records of Jesus' debates with Jewish teachers and the early Christian reflections on the Judaism of their times. Furthermore, no other religious tradition has been as thoroughly "defined" by preachers and teachers in the Church as has Judaism. This attitude is often enforced by lack of knowledge about the history of Jewish life and thought through the 1,900 years since the parting of the ways of Judaism and Christianity.
- 1.6 For these reasons there is special urgency for Christians to listen, through study and dialogue, to ways in which Jews understand their history and their traditions, their faith and their obedience "in their own terms". Furthermore, a mutual listening to how each is perceived by the other may be a step toward overcoming fears and correcting misunderstandings that have thrived on isolation.
- 1.7 Both Judaism and Christianity comprise a wide spectrum of opinions, options, theologies, and styles of life and service. Since generalizations often produce stereotyping, Jewish-Christian dialogue becomes the more significant by aiming at as full as possible a representation of views within the two communities of faith.
- 2. TOWARD A CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING OF JUDAISM

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2.1 Through dialogue with Jews, many Christians have come to appreciate the richness and vitality of Jewish faith and life in the covenant and have been enriched in their own understanding of God and the divine will for all creatures.

In dialogue with Jews, Christians have learned that the actual history of Jewish faith and experience does not match the images of Judaism that have dominated a long history of Christian teaching and writing, images that have been spread by Western culture and literature into other parts of the world.

2.2 In the understanding of many Christians, Judaism as a living tradition came to an end with the coming of Christ and with the destruction of the second temple of Jerusalem; the Church replaced the Jews as God's people, and the Judaism that survived is a fossilized religion of legalism.

In this view the covenant of God with the people of Israel was only a preparation for the coming of Christ, after which it was abrogated. Judaism of the first centuries before and after the birth of Jesus was therefore called "Late Judaism". The Pharisees were considered to represent the acme of legalism, Jews and Jewish groups were portrayed as negative models, and the truth and beauty of Christianity were thought to be enhanced by setting up Judaism as false and ugly.

2.3 Through a renewed study of Judaism and in dialogue with Jews, Christians become aware that Judaism in the time of Christ was in an early stage of its long life. Under the leadership of the Pharisees the Jewish people began a spiritual revival of remarkable power, which gave them the vitality capable of surviving the catastrophe of the loss of the temple. It gave birth to Rabbinic Judaism which produced the Mishnah and Talmud and built the structures for a strong and creative life through the centuries. 2.4 Jesus was born a Jew, born into this Jewish tradition. In this setting he was nurtured by the Hebrew Scriptures, which he accepted as authoritative and to which he gave a new interpretation in his life and teaching. In this context Jesus announced that the Kingdom of God was at hand, and in his resurrection his followers found the confirmation of his being both Lord and Messiah.

Christians should remember that some of the controversies reported in the New Testament between Jesus and the "scribes and Pharisees" find parallels within Pharisaism itself and its heir, Rabbinic Judaism. These controversies took place in a Jewish context, but when the words of Jesus came to be used by Christians who did not identify with the Jewish people as Jesus did, such sayings often became weapons in anti-Jewish polemics and thereby their original intention was tragically distorted. An internal Christian debate is now taking place on the question of how to understand passages in the New Testament that seem to contain anti-Jewish references.

- 2.5 Judaism, with its rich history of spiritual life, produced the Talmud as the normative guide for Jewish life in thankful response to the grace of . God's covenant with the people of Israel. Over the centuries important commentaries, profound philosophical works and poetry of spiritual depth have Leen added. For Jews the Talmud is as central and authoritative as the New Testament is for Christians. Judaism, like Christianity, is more than the religion of the Scriptures of Israel. What Christians call the Old Testament has received in the Talmud and later writings interpretations which for Jewish tradition share in the authority of Moses.
- 2.6 Christians as well as Jews look to the Hebrew Bible as the story recording Israel's sacred memory of God's election and covenant with this people. For Jews, it is their own story in historical continuity with the present. Christians, mostly of gentile background since early in the life of the Church, believe themselves to be heirs by grace of this same story. The unique relationship between the two communities, both worshipping the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, is a given historical fact, but how it is to be understood theologically is a matter of internal dialogue among Christians, which takes on increased seriousness as a result of dialogue with Jews.
- 2.7 Both commonalities and differences between the two faiths need to be examined carefully. In finding in the Scriptures of the Old and New lestaments the sole and ultimate authority sufficient for salvation, the
  Christian Church shares Israel's faith in the One God, whom it knows in the Spirit as the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. For Christians, Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of the Father, through whom millions have come to share in the love of, and to adore, the God who first made covenant with the people of Israel. Knowing the One God in Jesus Christ through the Spirit, therefore, Christians worship that God with a trinitarian confession of the incarnate presence, liturgical language foreign to Jewish worship.

Christians and Jews both believe that God has created men and women as the crown of creation and has called them to be holy and to exercise stewardship over the creation in accountability to God. Jews and Christians are taught by their Scriptures to know themselves responsible to their neighbours, especially to those who are weak, poor and oppressed. In various and distinct ways they look for the day in which God will redeem the creation. In dialogue with Jews many Christians come to a more profound appreciation of the Exodus hope of liberation, and pray and work for the coming of righteousness and peace on earth.

- 2.8 As more and more Christians of different traditions enter into dialogue with Jews in local, national and international situations, they will come to express their growing understanding of Judaism in other language, style and ways than has been done in these guidelines. Such understandings are to be shared among the churches for the enrichment of all.
- 3. AUTHENTIC CHRISTIAN WITNESS
- 3.1 Christians are called to witness to their faith in word and deed. The Church has a mission and it cannot be otherwise.
- 3.2 Christians have often cistorted their witness by coercive proselytism conscious and unconscious, overt and subtle. Referring to proselytism between Christian churches, the Joint Working Group of the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches stated: "Proselytism embraces whatever violates the right of the human person, Christian or non-Christian to be free from external coercion in religious matters." (Ecumenical Review, 1/1971, p.11)
- 3.3 Such rejection of proselytism, and such advocacy of respect for the integrity and the identity of all persons and all communities of faith are urgent in relation to Jews, especially those who live as minorities among Christians. Steps toward assuring non-coercive practices are of highest importance. In dialogue ways should be found for the exchange of concerns, perceptions and safeguards in these matters.
- 3,4 While Christians agree that there can be no place for coercion of any kind they do disagree - on the basis of their understandings of the Scriptures as to what constitutes authentic forms of mission.

There is a wide spectrum, from those who see the very presence of the Chur in the world as the witness called for, to those who see mission as the explicit and organized proclamation of the gospel to all who have not accepted Jesus as their Saviour. There is further disagreement where Jews are concerned. There are Christians who view a mission to the Jews as having a very special salvific significance, and those who believe the conversion of the Jews to be the eschatological event that will climax the history of the world. There are those who would place no special emphasis on a mission to the Jews, but would include them in the one mission to all who have not accepted Christ as their Saviour. There are those who believe that a mission to the Jews is not part of an authentic Christian witness, since the Jewish people finds its fulfilment in faithfulness to God's covenant of old.

Dialogue can rightly be described as a mutual witness, but only when the intention is to hear the others in order better to understand their faith, hopes, insights and concerns, and to give, to the best of one's ability, one's own understanding of one's own faith. The spirit of dialogue is to be fully present to one another in full openness and human vulnerability.

3.5 In dialogue with Jews it should be remembered that, according to rabbinic law, Jews who confess Jesus as the Messiah are considered apostate Jews. But for many Christians of Jewish origin, their identification with the Jewish people is a deep spiritual reality to which they seek to give expression in various ways, some by observing parts of Jewish tradition in worship and life style, many by a special commitment to the well-being of the Jewish people and the State of Israel.

Among Christians of Jewish origin there is the same wide spectrum of attitudes toward mission as among other Christians, and the same guidelines for dialogue and against coercion apply.

- 4. ANTISEMITISM A CONTINUING CONCERN IN THE JEWISH-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE
- 4.1 Christians cannot enter into dialogue with Jews without the awareness of antisemitism and its long persistent history, especially in countries where Jews constitute a minority among Christians. The World Council of Churches Assembly at its first meeting in Amsterdam 1948 condemned antisemitism: "We call upon the churches we represent to denounce antisemitism, no matter what its origin, as absolutely irreconcilable with the profession and practice of the Christian faith. Antisemitism is sin against God and man." This appeal has been reiterated many times.
- 4.2 Christians must face honestly the tragic history of antisemitism, which includes the Crusades, the Inquisition, pogroms and the Holocaust. It is only by facing this history that Christians can understand the deep-rooted suspicion that many Jews even today have of Christians and Christianity. Christians are called upon to fight antisemitism with all the resources at their disposal, the more so since there are disturbing signs of new and increased antisemitism in many parts of the world. Those who live in parts of the world where there is a record of antisemitic acts are duty bound to unmask for all Christians the ever-present danger they have come to recognize in anti-Judaism and antisemitism.

4.3 One Christian response to the Holocaust must be a resolve that it will never happen again. Teachings of contempt for Jews and Judaism in certain Christian traditions were a spawning ground for the evil of the Nazi Holocaust. The Church must learn so to preach and teach the Gospel as to make sure that it cannot be used against the Jewish people. The Christian churches must be in the forefront of any efforts to prevent conditions which might lead to further persecution and another slaughter of the Jewish people. , 1

- 4.4. Discrimination against and persecution of the Jewish people have deeprooted socio-economic and political aspects. Religious differences are magnified to justify racial hatred in support of vested interests. Similar phenomena are evident in many inter-racial conflicts. Christians should oppose all such religious prejudices, whereby people are made scapegoats for the failures and problems of societies and political regimes.
- 4.5 Christians in parts of the world with little or no Jewish presence do not wish to be conditioned by the experience and shortcoming of those who brought the Gospel to them; rather, they explore in their own ways the significance of Christian-Jewish relations from the earliest times to the present, for their life and witness.
- 5. THE LAND
- 5.1 The words from the World Council of Churches' Guidelines on Dialogue that one of the functions of dialogue is to allow participants to describe and witness to their faith "in their own terms" are of particular significance for the understanding of the indissoluble bond between the Land of Israel and the Jewish people. This bond has, after many centuries of dispersion, found expression in the State of Israel. The need for the State of Israel to exist in security and peace is fundamental to Jewish consciousness and therefore is of paramount importance in any dialogue with Jews.
- 5.2 When Christians enter into dialogue with Jews they also recognize the need of Palestinians for self-determination and expression of their national identity. It is important to hear Palestinians - Christian and Muslim express their special bonds with the Land "in their own terms". There must be a place in God's plan for all to live in security and peace.
- 5.3 The Land is holy for the three monotheistic religions yet understood in different ways. They have all maintained a presence in the Land from their beginnings.

For Muslims the Land has special significance and, with its holy places, has been an integral part of the Muslim world, symbolic of God's universal promises to all the children of Abraham.

For countless Christians the Land has special significance. It is the Land of the Bible. It was in this Land that the Lord Jesus Christ was born, worked and taught, suffered, died and was raised from the dead. But for Jews the relation to the land is of an essential nature. It is the Land of the Fathers and the Land of promise.

- 5.4 Many Christians find it difficult to grasp this essential nature of the Jewish attachment to the Land. They find it "particularistic", contrasting it with the "universalistic" thrust of the Christian message. Such a view does justice neither to the particular nor to the universal elements in Jewish, no less than in Christian understandings of the Land. Christians are therefore called to examine their theology and the history of their own faith on this point in any dialogue with Jews concerning the meaning of the Land.
- 5.5 Different understandings among Christians of the distinctions between faith and nationality, church and state, religion and politics, often hinder a genuine understanding of the significance of the Land for Jews, both in Israel and the diaspora. They also hinder an understanding of the significance of the Land for Palestinian Christians and Muslims.
- 5.6 These attachments to the Land only emphasize the need for sustained dialogue with Jews. In such dialogue, consideration should be given to finding ways to promote mutual respect and reconciliation among Jews, Christians and Muslims in the Middle East and elsewhere as a contribution to the common welfare of all members of God's human family.

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JEWISH PARTICIPANTS - NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES-AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE CONSULTATION - HAVERFORD, PENNSYLVANIA - JANUARY 5-6, 1982

Rabbi Andrew Baker, Area Director, American Jewish Committee, Washington, D.C.
Judith H. Banki, Assistant National Director, Interreligious Affairs, American Jewish Committee, New York, New York
Rabbi Henry Cohen, Congregation Beth David, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Nancy Fuchs-Kreimer, Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Manhattan Reconstructionist Havurah, New York, New York
Joyce Galpern, Area Director, American Jewish Committee, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Inge Lederer Gibel, Program Specialist, Interreligious Affairs, American Jewish Committee, New York, New York
Haskell L. Lazere, Deputy Director, National Domestic Affairs Department, American Jewish Committee, New York, New York
Rabbi Mark Loeb, Congregation Beth-El; President, Baltimore Board of Rabbis, and Co-Chairman, Synagogue Council of Baltimore
Edward Newman, Member of Board of Directors and former Chairman of Interreligious and Foreign Affairs Commissions, American Jewish Committee, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Martın Raffel, Assıstant Area Dırector, American Jewish Committee, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Rabbi A James Rudin, Assistant National Director, Interreligious Affairs, American Jewish Committee, New York, New York
Rabbi Norbert Samuelson, Professor of Philosophy, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Rabbi Richard Steinbrink, Congregation Rodeph Shalom, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Bernard Stern, Professor of Administrative Sciences, Villanova University, Villanova, Pennsylvania
Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, National Director, Interreligious Affairs, American Jewish Committee, New York, New York



The American Jewish Committee

Institute of Human Relations - 165 East 56 Street, New York, N Y 10022 - 212/751-4000 - Cable Wishcom, N Y

April 16, 1982

The Rev. David Simpson, Director Office of Christian-Jewish Relations National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. 475 Riverside Drive New York, New York 10115

Dear David:

Thank you for your recent letter in which you thoughtfully invite the American Jewish Committee to react to the NCC Middle East Committee draft resolution proposed for consideration by the NCC Governing Board at its May 12-14 meeting. At the outset, I want to express the appreciation of the AJC's Interreligious Affairs Department, with whom I have examined the text carefully, for your sensitivity and statesmanship in sharing the statement.

In the spirit of friendship and candor which has characterized our relationship with NCC lay and professional leadership over many years, I must tell you and your NCC associates that my colleagues and I are both dismayed and disappointed over both the tenor and content of much of this statement, and for the following reasons

1. The text is characterized by a one-sided and unfair bias that is established in the opening paragraph and that dominates throughout the resolution. Thus, the opening sentence - "The final withdrawal of Israeli military forces from the Sinai area occupied in 1967 is an important achievement in the peace process" suggests that Israel was forced against its will to withdraw its forces, when, in fact, the opposite is the truth Israel agreed, as its commitment to the peace process, to withdraw its forces, to give up the Sinai, Yamit and the oil fields.

Israel made a great sacrifice and runs great risks in arriving at this historic decision. That action - and the breakthrough decision of Egypt to recognize the sovereign State of Israel and to establish diplomatic relations with Israel deserve to be acknowledged as the major developments they represent, rather than to be referred in the grudging, even negative, formulation that now obtains. In its present formulation, it comes through to us as nothing less than an anti-Israel bias Both Israel and Egypt deserve more generous credit in the text than its present pious, vague affirmations propose.

2. On Page 2, only the actions of the Israeli (not "Begin") government are singled out as impairing progress toward peace As an independent American

MAYNARD I WISHNER President = BERTRAM H GOLD Executive Vice-President HOWARD I FRIEDMAN Chairman Boald of Governors THEODORY Let OFF Chairman Pational Executive Council & ROBERT L PELZ Chairman Board of Trustees = E ROBERT GOUDNI-G Treasurer = MEP/IN H RISEMAN Secr-tary = ELAINE PETSCHEY Associate Treasurer = ALFRED H MOSES Chairman Board of Trustees = Honorary Presidents MORRIS B ABRAM ARTHUR J GOLDBERG PHILIP E HOFF-MAN RICHAPD MAASS ELMER L WINTER = Honorary Vice-Presidents NATHAN APPLEMAN MARTIN GANG RUTH R GODDAPD ANDHEW GODDMAN JAMES MARSHALL WILLIAM ROSENWALG = MAX M rISHER Honorary Chairman National Executive Council = MAURICE GLINERT Hono ary Treasurer JOHN SLAWSON Executive Vice President Emerity = Vice Presidents MORRIS K BLAUSTEIN Balumore ROBERT D GRIES Cleveland RITA E HAUSER New York, MILES JAFFE Detroit HARRIS L KEMPNER JR Galveston JOHN D LEVY S' Louis HAMILTGH M 1028 JR Chicago LEON RABIN Dailas JOHN H STEINHART San Francisco EMILY W SUNSTEIN Philadelphia

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Jewish organization, we do not necessarily agree with or support all Israeli government actions (nor those of our own American or other governments) - and even less expect the NCC to do so - we do believe that we and the NCC constituent members in the pews have a legitimate right to expect that the same yardstick be applied rigorously to the actions of all Middle East governments involved in the conflict. Thus, it is deeply troubling to us that while the text devotes twelve lines to specifying the "obstacles" to peace attributed to Israel, there is not a single line of critical appraisal of either Jordan's public declarations that those Palestinians who cooperate with Israel in the peace process will be dealt a death sentence (shades of Ayatollah Khomeini, and some commitment to human rights by Jordan'). Nor is any mention made of the record of frequent assassinations of Palestinians who have sought non-violent means of cooperating with Israelis toward peaceful methods of co-existence.

3. Throughout the statement, there are calls for Israel1 actions but whenever the PLO is referred to, only a change in rhetoric is requested. It is inexplicable to us that there is not a single appeal for an end to PLO-inspired terrorist actions which have resulted in the murder of so many civilians and which continue to this day.

4. American Jews, and we believe millions of American Christians, share the conviction that there cannot be any dialogue with the PLO without a clearlystated precondition of PLO recognition of Israel and repudiation of their destructive purposes as specified in the PLO charter. Moreover, this passage (p 3) appears to be a serious departure from the NCC Policy Statement.

5. Finally, it is deeply distressing to find the massive human tragedy of Lebanon - where a major Arab Christian community has been virtually undermined has been relegated to the very end of the statement as if this were an afterthought. Furthermore, there is not a single mention of Syria's imperialist domination of large parts of Lebanon, nor any reference to the installation of Syria's missiles on the soil of another sovereign nation and all the destabilization that represents.

If the NCC wishes to contribute to reconciliation and peace, an altogether more balanced and even-handed approach will be required, in our judgment, one that takes into account the serious flaws outlined above

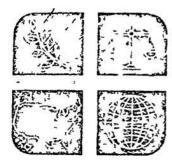
With warm personal good wishes, I am,

Condially yours,

Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum National Director Interreligious Affairs

MHT.FM

cc· Judith Bankı Inge Lederer Gıbel Rabbı A. James Rudın



# NATION AL COURCIL OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRISTIN THE USA.

OFFICE ON CHRISTIAN JEWISH RELATIONS475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115(212) 870-2156James Armstrong, PresidentClaire Randall, General Secretary

April 7, 1982

CONFIDENTIAL

Dear Committee Members and Friends.

Enclosed is a rough draft of a resolution initiated by the NCC Middle East Committee for consideration by the Governing Board of the NCCC at its meeting in Nashville, Tennessee on May 12-14, 1982.

Also enclosed is a schedule for preparation of the resolution which provides for reaction from the constituency of the NCC Committee on Christian Jewish Relations. We do not have much time, but I feel it is urgent that we do whatever we can to make the resolution an opportunity for positive dialogue; between the National Council of Churches and the Jewish community.

Flease share this document with your staff and give me your reaction, preferably in writing, as soon as possible. We have been assured that we can arrange special meetings with a few people at the NCC to discuss this document. Landrum Shields and I will be a formal part on an NCC interunit committee working on the finalization of this document up until the final days before the Governing Board meeting. I will be calling you by the beginning of next week to talk about our next step.

Thank you for your patience and cooperation. I hope your Passover and/or Easter will be peaceful and meaningful.

Respectfully,

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David Simpson Director

David E Simpson Director

Landrum Shields Chairman

### RESOLUTION ON

### THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS

The final withdrawal of Israeli military forces from the Sinai area occupied in 1967 is an important achievement in the peace process initiated in "A Framework for Peace in the Middle East Agreed at Camp David" in 1978. The faithful conclusion of this agreement demonstrates that negotiation can bring an end to hostilities of long standing in the Middle East.

Therefore, the Governing Board of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., meeting in Nashville, Tennessee, May 12-14, 1982 reiterates its statement of thanksgiving adopted in November 1978 as follows:

Praises God that the Camp David negotiations took place within the context of a common call to prayer, addressed to the Muslim, Jewish and Christian religious communities,

<u>Celebrates</u> the role of Egypt ... in the creative search for peace in the area,

<u>Rejoices</u> with Israel in feeling that its dream of peace and deliverance might be realized...".

Yet this achievement is only a partial realization of the essential comprehensive peace required in the Middle East. Promises made at Camp David to "recognize the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and their just requirements" and to provide a "resolution of the Palestinian problem in all its aspects," are still to be fulfilled. Lack of progress on the central issue of self-determination of the Palestinian people, both Christian and Muslim, continues to endanger the peace process. The present stalemate also threatens to plunge Lebanon and other states of the area into a war which could escalate into a nuclear confrontation jeopardizing the survival of humankind.

Page 2 of 4

Recent actions by the Begin Government of Israel seem to be a retreat from the Camp David promises. It has pursued a policy of establishing new Israeli settlements and expanding existing ones on territories occupied since 1967, has extended Israeli law to the territory of the Golan Heights and has continued to 'expropriate Palestinian land on the West Bank and Gaza. Further, it has dismissed elected Palestinian officials on the West Bank and has substituted an Israeli civilian official for the military governor. All these actions, which impair progress towards negotiations involving Palestinian self-determination and the future status of the occupied territories have given credence to Palestinian fears that Israel intendes to annex the remaining historic lands of Palestine. These actions have also prompted a critical response from many Israelis.

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The gravity of the present situation requires forceful action by the united States government and the American people who must play a key role in bringing the combattants together in negotiation. That this is feasible is evidenced by the recent ceasefire negotiated in July 1981 between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization albeit through intermediaries.

Recent suggestions made recently by officials of the Palestine Liberation Organization indicate their acceptance as possible a diplomatic solution to the Palestinian question based upon a coexistence of a Palestinian state and Israel. Similar positions advanced by members of the peace movement in Israel suggest that there are constituences in both peoples that would welcome such an initiative by the U.S.A.

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Therefore, the Governing Board of the National Council of the Churches of

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Christ in the U.S.A..

- 1. Calls upon its constituent communions and their members to.
  - a. act upon their affirmation of the fact that "the importance of the Middle East imposes a responsibility for .. prudent and perservering action" and that " .. what U.S.A Christians say and do and think about the problems of the Middle East or what they fail to do may ... make the difference between the achievement of justice and peace or continuing conflict and world-endangering war.";
  - b. speak out to the President of the United States, Secretary of State and to their elected representatives in Congress, in light of the seriousness of this moment, to work more diligently for a just settlement of this conflict and for the construction of a peaceful future for all the peoples of the region;
- Urges the Government of the United States of America to forulate a new dynamic Middle East policy that:
  - a. promotes the goal of mutual recognition between Israel and the representatives of the Palestinian people,
  - b. makes evident its continued commitment to the Camp David recognition of "the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people" and the "resolution of the Palestinian problem in all its aspects" by establishing an open dialogue with representatives of the Palestinian people,
  - c. makes possible United States government dialogue with the Palestine Liberation Organization as a means of achieving the above goals. PLO recognition of Israel should be seen as a result of these and other discussions rather than a precondition to dialogue,
  - d. calls upon the Arab States and the PLO to encourage the use of diplomatic efforts to achieve a negotiated peace and abandonment of rhetoric which inhibits responsible dialogue,
  - e. calls upon the Israel: Government to state clearly its perceived geographic and other security needs and how it intends to meet

them within the context of a peaceful settlement,

- f. works for substantial reductions in arms transfers both to and from the Middle East nations. These transfers have grown to an alarming level in the last decade The United States should itself show restraint in its arms sales and transfers to the region and should engage immediately in discussions with its European allies and the Soviet Union to ensure a multi-lateral approach to such reductions of arms transfers,
- 3. Urges to Government of the United States of America to reaffirm its commitment to the independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Republic of Lebanon as a country where religious pluralism may once again thrive. Resolution of the conflict in Lebanon must be pursued as a matter of high importance in its own right, even though inextricably linked to the Israel-Palestinian conflict.

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Policy Base Middle East Policy Statement adopted November 6, 1980

4.7.82 jrb

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Process Statement re. Draft Resolution on Middle East Peace Process

- Draft resolution will be initiated by Middle East Committee of DOM March 30-31.
- 2. Draft as approved will be forwarded to Chair and staff of following units:
- ICIC Joanne Kagiwada. Dwain Epps
   Christian Jewish Relations Landrum Shields, David Simpson
   Christian Muslim Relations Dale Bishop, Byron Haines
   Middle East Committee DOM Lamer Gibble, R. Butler
  - In telephone conference call this group will perfect resolution which will then be forwarded to DOM Executive Committee on April 28 for sending to Governing Board.
  - 4. Will be docketted by Governing Board but not mailed in advance due to tenuous situation. Staff team of above units will work logether in proposing any alterations which developments may require.

ONLY FOR RABBI HI TANAEN SHOW CONFIDENTIAL

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The background of our story is that there are 42,000,000 Protestants in the United States who are members of the mainline Protestant denominations .....such as Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Methodists, etc. They contribute a total fo \$225,000,000 each week to their churches. These people also belong to two ecumenical groups, the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA and the world-wide World Council of Churches in Geneva. It is the money these people give that we are interested in. What happens to it after it leaves the Collection plate is the major thrust of the story.

There are three main sections:

- I. Recently these ecumencial groups have become the target of criticism from more conservative groups who claim that they favor the radical left, that they support liberation movements around the world, that they are overly critical of the US while <u>being soft on the Communist bloc.</u> An interesting controversy has developed because the people who belong to these churches in the USA are generally conservative....while the people in the church bureaucracies are very liberal.
- II. The second section deals with liberation theology as the theory behind all this...the belief that changing the structures of society will make it more just..and the fact that most of these liberationists seem to favor the Marxist option. The big example is the World Council's Program to Combat Racism...which has given direct grants to many liberation movements as well as support groups.... Examples are FRELIMO, SWAPO, The Patriotic Front.
- III. The third...and strongest section...will deal with some examples of how churches are being used, in effect, to further the Soviet-Cuban view of the world...used to advance certain political causes...to provide a respectable front...and a tax exempt one...for political purposes, including propaganda...and that some money may go for even more sinister purposes...even to support the cause of world terrorism.

It is in this third area that we hope you can help. It would help a great deal if we could get proof that intelligence agencies anywhere feel that church groups....specifically the ones mentioned here...are involved in this way.. This information would be most critical.

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The Rev. David Simpson, Director Office of Christian-Jewish Relations National Council of theChurches of Christ in - the U.S.A.

475 Riverside Drive

New York, N. Y.

Dear David,

Thank you for your recent letter in which you thoughtfully invite the American Jewish Committee to react to the NCC Middle Est Committee draft resolution proposed for consideration by the NCC Governing Board at its May 12-14 meeting. At the outset, Xak mexanyx I want to empress the appreciation of the AJC's Interreligious Affairs Department, with whom I have exemined the text carefully, for your sensitivity and statesmanship in sharing the statement.

In the spirit of friendship and candor which has characterized our relationship with NCC lay and professional leadership over many years, I must tell you and your NCC associates that my colleagues and I are both dismayed and desappointed over both the tenor and content of much of this statement, and for the following reasons:

1. The text is characterized by a one-sided and unfair bias that is established in the opening paragraph and that dominates throughout the resolution. Thus, the opening sentence - "The final withdrawal of Israeli military forces from the Sinai area occupied in 1967 is an important achi evement in the peace process" - suggests that Israel was forced against its will to withdraw its forces, when, in fact, the opposite is the truth. Israel volunteered, as its commitment to the peace process, to withdraw its forces, to give up the Sinai, Yamit and the oil fields.

Israel made a great sacrifice and runs great risks in arriving at this historic dedision. That action - and the breakthrough decision of Egypt to recognize the sovereign State of Israel and to establish diplomatic relations with Israel deserve to be acknowledged as the major developments they represent, rather than km kmx to be referred in the grudging, even negative, formulation that now obtains. In its present formulation, it comes through to us as nothing less than an mk anti-Israel bias. Both Israel axade and Egypt deserve more generous credit in the text than its present plous, vague affirmations propose.

2. On Page 2, only the actions of Prime Minister Menachem Beigin's Government are singled out as impairing progress toward peace. As an independent American Jewish organization, we do not necessarily agree with or support all Israeli government actions (nor those of our own Emerican or other governments) - and even less expect the NCC to do so/we do believe that we and the NCC constituent members in the pews have a legitimate right to expect that the same yardstick be applied rigorously to the actiins of all Middle East governments involved in the conflict. Thus, it is deeply troubling tous that while the text devotes twelve lines to specifying the "obstacles" to peace attributed to Israel, there is not a single line of critical appraisal of either Jordan's public declarations that those Palestinians who cooperate with Israel in the peace process will be dealt a death sentence (shedes of Ayatollah Khomeini, and some commitment to human rights by Jordan!) Nor is any mention made of the record of frequent assessmetions of Palestinians who have sought non-violent means of cooperating with Israelis in moving away from violence and terrorism to peaceful methods of co-existence.

3. Throughout the statement, there are calls for Israeli actions but whenever the PLO is referred to, only a change in rhetoric is requested. It is inexplicable to as that there is not a single appeal for an end to PLO-inspired terratist actions which have resulted in the murder of so many civilians and which continue to this day.

4. American Jews, and we believe millions of American Christians, share the conviction that there cannot be any dialogue with the PLO without a clearly-stated precondition of PLO recognition of Israel and repudiation of their destructive purposes as specified in the PLO chatter. Moreover, this passage appears to be a serious departure from the NCC Policy statement.

5. Finally, it is deeply distressing to find the massive human tragedy of Lebanon - where a major Arab Christian community has been virtually undermined - has been relegated to the very end of the statement as if this were an afterthought. Furthermore, there is not a single mention of Syria's imperialist domanation of large parts of Lebanon, nor any reference to the installation of Syria's missiles on the max's soil of another sovereign nation and all the destablilization that representss

If the NCC wishes to contribute to reconciliation and peace, an altogether more balanced and even-handed approach will be required, in our judgment, one that takes into account the serious flaws outlined above.

With warm personal good wishes, I am,

Cordially yours,

RMHT

cc: JB, IG, JR

bcc: SAK

### NOT FOR PUBLICATION

### THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

date	June	20.	1980
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AJC Area Directors,

Rabbi Marc H lanenbaum, National Interreligious Affairs Director

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Suggested Program for Interpreting Recent Middle East Developments with Christian Leaders

During the past several years, AJC's Interreligious Affairs Department has made substantial investment of staff time and resources in working with the leadership of the National Council of Churches in the formulation of a new NCC Policy statement on the Middle East. Now, for the first time since 1969, the National Council will adopt such an official statement at its 1980 Governing Board in New York City.

As you know, the NCC comprises 32 member denominations (both mainline Protestant and Eastern Orthodox), representing some 40 million American Christians When adopted next November, the new Middle East Policy declaration will undoubtedly receive wide attention in the mass media, and will inevitably be brought to the attention of U.S. Government officials, the United Nations, as well as to the rank and file of the NCC member church bodies. It will also become the foundation for future NCC Middle East resolutions and action programs in the 1980s

Following two years of preparation, the proposed Policy statement was made public this past March, and it was given the required "first reading" at the May 1980 NCC Governing Board meeting in Indianapolis. This statement is still open to substantive changes and amendments prior to its November adoption The NCC has, in fact, actively solicited, suggestions and comments from all interested groups, including the American Jewish community.

## September 5, 1980, has been set as the deadline for receipt of all such responses

Following that date, a final draft will be prepared for adoption at the November session. We need to anticipate realistically that there will be substantial interventions from Palestinian groups advocating pro-PLO, anti-Israel views, as well as from Christian missionary groups in Arab and Islamic countries.

The AJC has held a series of conferences and seminars with several major Protestant denominations, who are key constituents of the NCC, as well as with the NCC's Commission on Regional and Local Ecumenism. These have been in addition to the several meetings with the NCC and the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, in which the AJC has actively participated.

Based on those conversations, the AJC has prepared the enclosed critique of the proposed NCC Policy statement. We also enclose the text of the original 2

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draft of the NCC statement itsalf <u>Ne urge you to read both documents and</u> to give us the benefit of your reactions for possible inclusion in our final <u>critique</u> which we plan to share with the network of Protestant denominational leaders with whom we carry on an active, orgoing dialogue program

During the coming summer months, we would also encourage you to share the draft AJC critique with your local Council of Churches and local mainline Protestant contacts with a view toward communicating to them our concerns as expressed in this document If they share these views, it would be most helpful that they be encouraged to write down their own opinions and send them to their denominational leaders, especially those who serve on the NCC's General Board - (We would of course like to have any copies of their letters ) You may rest assured that the pro-PLO forces will be heard from during the summer months.

My colleague, Rabby James Rudin, and I serve as "official fraternal delegates" to the NCC General Board meetings, and it would be most helpful to us to know what local Protestant leaders think about the proposed NCC policy statement.

Also enclosed is a copy of an AJC statement responding to the earlier report of the NCC Middle East Study Panel At the May meeting of the NCC Governing Board in Indianapolis, Rabbi Rudin was invited to read this statement before the entire meeting. It is interesting to note how well this statement was received in the face of its strong critical character. (The NCC Panel's report was simply "received" by the NCC Board, it has no binding authority for the policy-making of the NCC and no recessary relation to the new proposed policy statement.)

Since Jim Rudin and I will be attending the November 1980 NCC General Board meeting as official observers, we would be most grateful to you for any other information about local Protestant attitudes and activities that would help us to be better prepared

Have a good and, above all, a peaceful summer!

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MHT.RPR

Enclosures

80-700-41

### A Response to the National Council of Churches Proposed Middle East Policy Statement

### Prepared by the Interreligious Affairs Department of the American Jewish Committee, New York City

June 1980

The first two-thirds of the document deals with the "divisiveness" that has sometimes characterized the relationship between Western churches and Middle Eastern Christians. The proposed Policy Statement expresses regret and contrition for the "scars" that have resulted from this unhappy history, and calls for true partnership between the two branches of Christianity. Clearly, the call for equality between Eastern and Western churches is an internal Christian consideration, springing from a laudable ecumenical impulse.

However, we remind our American Christian colleagues that the official report of the NCC's Middle Eastern Panel called attention to "the theological differences that still exist within the Christian community over the meaning of the Abrahamic covenant and the continuing role of the Jewish people." The report commented "Most Panel members saw that some theological positions, when combined with the political dynamics of the area, could be understood as what the West would call anti-semitism. Thus, the seeds of religious alienation can be carried through the churches themselves." We hope that the respect and understanding for Judaism which has developed in recent years among Western Christians will not be jeopardized by exposure to attitudes which, whether theologically or politically motivated, are hostile to the Jewish people.

The last third of the document is focused on the Arab-Israeli conflict. As presently written, the Statement contains some positive elements along with certain troubling statements and recommendations that we regard as potentially threatening to Israel's security. \$

The NCC document makes five specific recommendations.

- (a) Cessation of all acts of violence by all parties;
- (b) Recognition by the Arab States and by the Palestinian Arabs of Israel as a Jewish state with secure, defined, and recognized borders.
- (c) Recognition by Israel of the right of national self-determination for the Palestinian Arabs and of their right to select their own representatives and to establish a Palestinian entity, including a sovereign state;
- (d) Agreement on and creation of a mode of international guarantees for the sovereign and secure borders of Israel and of any Palestinian entity established as part of the peace process;
- (e) Constructive solutions to the problems of refugees and persons displaced as a result of the Israel-Palestine and related conflicts dating from 1948, including questions of compensation and return (Lines 591-602).

Among the recommendations and other items considered in the proposed statement, there are a number we view as constructive contributions. The NCC's call for Arab States and Palestinian Arabs to recognize "Israel as a Jewish state with secure, defined, and recognized borders" is especially welcome. The recommendation on the "problems of refugees" is fair-minded, because it is not limited solely to the Arab refugees of the various Arab-Israeli wars. Jewish refugees who fled Arab countries as well as all other Middle Eastern refugees are included in section E.

It is important to note that there is no mention of the Palestine Liberation Organization in the proposed Policy Statement. We urge that the final Policy Statement condemn the PLO for its many acts of terrorism carried out against innocent civilians and for its continued public commitment to the destruction of the State of Israel.

Also absent is any mention of the status of Jerusalem or the question of Jewish settlements on the West Bank. We find this helpful and appropriate, believing that these two issues can only be resolved through direct negotiations as part of an ongoing peace process.

The document is clear and unambiguous in confronting the Christian roots of anti-Semitism, noting that "images of Jews have been distorted by Christians from earliest times, and have resulted in an anti-Semitism demonstrated most clearly in the Holocaust and are still widespread among Christians and others in the U.S. today...in this country anti-Semitism and hatred of Muslims are problems of U.S. Christians...churches must undertake new programs at every level of life to create...understanding and respect." (Lines 212-214 and 229-233).

While the proposed Policy Statement also strongly affirms religious, cultural and political pluralism, it also cautions the "peoples of the West not to impose a single mode of dealing with the rights of minorities" thus showing sensitivity to other long-established cultural modalities. The document warns that the imposition of a "secular pluralistic democracy" in the Middle East would imply "an acceptance of atheism or indifferentism " (Lines 469-470). The affirmation of Israel as a "Jewish state" represents a positive development in our judgment, and we believe it is imperative that the explicit reference to a Jewish state be retained in the final document.

The NCC Policy Statement also notes that the Middle East is filled with many regional conflicts. This recognition is also a positive development since the NCC has, in the past, often focused exclusively on the Arab-Israel conflict. The document briefly mentions the problems of Lebanon, the struggle of the Kurdish people, Cyprus, the two Yemens and guerilla warfare in Dhofar.

One of our strongest criticisms of the NCC has been that during the 1973 Yom Kippur War its Governing Board adopted a resolution that called upon the United States and the Soviet Union to cease arms shipments to the Middle East. The NCC resolution clearly would have had no impact opon' the Soviet government, and thus its net effect might have been to deprive Israel of arms urgently needed for her self-defense at a time of great peril. ,

Since the NCC has no real influence upon the Soviet government, the resolution, in reality, was actually directed at Israel's only arms supplier, the United States.

This 1980 document, however, acknowledges that the United States is not alone in "supplying arms to the Middle East." It recognizes that other nations also provide weapons and that "transnational corporations seek to influence state policies in their own interest." (Lines 538-539). The proposed Policy Statement declares that "outside interests are imposing a massive injustice on the peoples of the Middle East." (Lines 531-532).

However, there are a number of problematic elements. The reference in section C to a possible Palestinian "sovereign state" is particularly troublesome, insofar as it says nothing to preclude a PLO-Soviet dominated state. We strongly urge that this recommendation be omitted from the final text.

Just what such a Palestinian state might mean was clearly articulated at a meeting held in Damascus, Syria in May 1980, at the fourth Congress of Al Fatah, the largest and most influential organization in the PLO. Al Fatah reaffirmed its commitment to the destruction of Israel, the rejection of any compromise, and the replacement of Israel with a "Palestinian democratic state on all of the Palestinian soil." Al Fatah asserted

"The armed struggle within the occupied land will be escalated across all borders of confrontation with the Zionist enemy. Fatah is an independent national revolutionary movement whose aim is to liberate Palestine completely and to liquidate the Zionist entity [Israel] politically, economically, militarily, culturally and ideologically."

In discussing the concept of self-determination, the authors of the Policy Statement admit that the "international community lacks adequate criteria to define the right in particular instances and procedures for its peaceful and just implementation." (Lines 431-433). The proposed Policy Statement recognizes "the intellectual and legal difficulties of defining standards by which competing claims can be judged," (Lines 453-454), and acknowledges that one group's right to self-determination "inevitably puts that group in conflict with others who see the same territory as their own." The document thus recognizes, but never comes to grip with, the reality that claims for Palestinian self-determination frequently imply the destruction of Israel. The document is unable to resolve this dilemma, nor does it offer adequate guidelines to ensure that Palestinian self-determination will not be defined in Al Fatah's terms. Nor does the NCC document offer adequate guidelines for judging the various claims of self-determination. However, the section on self-determination does describe the NCC's own self-understanding of its role as "giving voice to the voiceless, providing support for the powerless when their claims are believed to be just " (Lines 449-450). The NCC believes that the Palestinians are the "voiceless" and the "powerless" and, thus it feels obligated to present their views in any discussion on selfdetermination. There are other peoples in the Middle East seeking selfdetermination, such as the Kurds, yet the NCC does not call for national selfdetermination for them. The repeated emphases only on Palestinians seems disproprotionate to the realities of the entire region.

Another disturbing aspect is the suggestion that pecause the West and particularly the United States, is dependent on the Middle East oil supplies,

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the U.S may have to adapt and change its foreign policy Several examples will illustrate this point "The historic U.S. involvement in the region is made more intense by the dependence of the United States and its allies on the oil reserves of the region. Continuing commetment to the State of Israel is also affected by that dependence of the United States and its allies on the oil resources of the region (Lines 382-386)...Awareness of U.S. dependence and vulnerability (Line 389) .. the world's critical dependence upon the oil resources of the region" (Line 290). However, economists have pointed out that the rise in oil prices and the deliberate cutback of oil production are not a result of U.S. Middle East policy. It should be remembered that the Shah of Iran, America's erstwhile ally, was among the leaders who pressed for sharp increases in oil prices.

The Camp David Accords of 1978 are glossed over and given short shrift in the Policy Statement. The Accords are mentioned only once in the document. "The partial nature of the Camp David Agreements...has led to a partial solution of the conflicts" (Lines 607 and 605). We believe that the Camp David Accords must be welcomed and affirmed in the document as the fruit of the only existing peace process in the Middle East. For the NCC to limit itself to a grudging acceptance of the Camp David Accords, we believe, is a disservice to the cause of peace. The Camp David Accords have brought about the most important and hopeful move towards peace in the history of the Israeli-Arab conflict.

In the context of the statement, the word "Zionist" seems polemical and mischievous Lines 582 and 583 read: "For the Zionist Jew the state (Israel) should have a Jewish majority and have a distinctly Jewish character." While welcoming the document's reference to Zionism, we believe, however, this sentence reflects a biased and uninformed attitude towards the national liberation movement of the Jewish people. Because the NCC has historically been supportive of all other national liberation movements, we urge that this sentence be recast to reflect the universal support of the Zionist ideal by Jewish people everywhere.

To sum up, the document has some positive aspects including the legitimacy of Israel as a Jewish state, the NCC's commitment to religious, cultural and political pluralism, its call to combat anti-Semitism, the attention that it gives to the human rights of minorities in the Middle East, and the recognition that the U.S. is not alone in supplying arms to the Middle East. Finally, the ommission of any reference to the PLO, Jerusalem and Jewish settlements is helpful

On the negative side, the document points to a Palestinian state, which, based on present realities, is likely to be hostile to Israel's very existence. The Policy Statement is vague and selective on the question of self-determination, and it minimizes the importance of the Camp David Accords. It makes a false connection between Middle East oil sources and American policy towards Israel.

The American Jewish Committee shares with the National Council of Churches a profound commitment to peace, justice, and reconciliation in the Middle East. In the AJC's judgment, the process embodied in the Camp David Accords points to the best way of achieving these goals. The AJC at its 1980 Annual Meeting asserted that "the principal obstacle to Arab-Israeli peace is...the continuing refusal of Arab states other than Egypt to recognize Israel and to negotiate with her within the Camp David framework or on any other terms. Instead, they support the PLO in its commitment to the destruction of Israel." We urge the NCC, in its search for a balanced and fair Policy Statement, not to lose sight of this central issue. rpr

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# National Jewish Community Relations

55 West 42nd Street, New York, N Y 10036

(212) 564-3450

June 25, 1980

Rabbi A. James Rudin American Jewish Committee 165 East 56th Street New York, NY 10022

Dear Jim:

I've taken a stab at trying to address your concerns about the first paragraph of the letter from our Executive Committee under the signature of Bennett Yanowitz addressed to the president of the NCC I don't know if I've made things better or worse, to tell you the truth, but, in any case, it's just a draft You are free to play with it and send down whatever alternative language you'd like to the meeting in Baltimore. There, the Israel Commission, and then the Executive Committee itself will deliberate the form and content of the letter and, I'm sure, find a way of opening and closing it in a manner satisfactory to all.

I will be leaving on Thursday morning for Baltimore, so if you want to communicate with me directly, please leave a message with my office or at the Cross Key Inn in Baltimore (301-532-6900).

Thanks again for your substantive comments as well.

Cordially,

Charney V. Bromberg Director, Middle East Affairs

CVB:ncg

cc: Marc H Tanenbaum

Ira Silverman

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Dear Rev. Howard:

I am writing at the behest of the Executive Committee of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, the planning and coordinating body for the 11 national and 108 local member agencies comprising the field of Jewish community relations. Several of our national member agencies have maintained a long-standing relationship with the NCC reflecting our shared commitment to the need for an open and frank exchange of views on matters of local, national, and international importance. In keeping with the spirit of that relationship, we have joined together to engage in a serious and collegial dialogue with lay leaders and staff of the National Council of Churches as your Governing Board works toward the adoption of a definitive policy statement concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict. In furtherance of this dialogue, I want to share with you the thoughts of our constituent agencies concerning the NCC draft Policy Statement on the Middle East and hope that you will share this letter with - the members of the NCC Governing Board.



THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE INSTITUTE OF HUMAN RELATIONS 165 East 56th Street, New York, NY 10022 • (212) 751-4000

> from the desk of HAROLD APPLEBAUM Field Services Program Coordinator Community Services Department

TO· Federations, CRC's and National Jewish Organizations:

Enclosed please find

Suggested Program for Interpreting Recent Middle East

Developments with Christian Leaders

Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum National Interreligious Affairs Director

AJC's Interreligious Affairs Department has worked closely with the leadership of the National Council of Churches during recent years in the formulation of a new NCC Policy Statement on the Middle East This past May, the proposed statement was given the required "first reading" at the NCC Governing Board meeting in Indianapolis. The statement is still open to substantative changes before its adoption in November.

Enclosed in addition to the proposed statement is AJC's critique, as well as its statement responding to an earlier report of the NCC Middle East Study Panel.

Discussion of the statement and critique with local NCC and Protestant contacts is strongly urged. Rabbis Marc H. Tanenbaum and A James Rudin will attend the November 1980 NCC General Board meeting as official observers and will work to incorporate modifications in the NCC statement before that time.

June 26, 1980 HA/br Enclosures #80-310-40 2 a, b, c, 1 (b,c) 2 h (NJO)

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

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### THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

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- **date** June 20, 1980
- to AJC Area Directors,
- from Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, National Interreligious Affairs Director
- subject Suggested Program for Interpreting Recent Middle East Developments with Christian Leaders

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During the coming summer months, we would also encourage you to share the draft AJC critique with your local Council of Churches and local mainline Protestant contacts with a view toward communicating to them our concerns as expressed in this document. If they share these views, it would be most helpful that they be encouraged to write down their own opinions and send them to their denominational leaders, especially those who serve on the NCC's General Board. (We would of course like to have any copies of their letters.) You may rest assured that the pro-PLO forces will be heard from during the summer months.

My colleague, Rabbi James Rudin, and I serve as "official fraternal delegates" to the NCC General Board meetings, and it would be most helpful to us to know what local Protestant leaders think about the proposed NCC policy statement

Also enclosed is a copy of an AJC statement responding to the earlier report of the NCC Middle East Study Panel. At the May meeting of the NCC Governing Board in Indianapolis, Rabbi Rudin was invited to read this statement before the entire meeting. It is interesting to note how well this statement was received in the face of its strong critical character. (The NCC Panel's report was simply "received" by the NCC Board, it has no binding authority for the policy-making of the NCC and no necessary relation to the new proposed policy statement.)

Since Jim Rudin and I will be attending the November 1980 NCC General Board meeting as official observers, we would be most grateful to you for any other information about local Protestant attitudes and activities that would help us to be better prepared.

Have a good and, above all, a peaceful summer!

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Enclosures

80-700-41

### May 7, 1980

### STATEMENT OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE IN REACTION TO THE REPORT OF THE MIDDLE EAST PANEL OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

While positive in a number of respects, the Report of the Middle East Panel of the NCC is of deep concern to the AJC in its call for U.S government "open dialogue with the PLO" and because some of its recommendations would, in effect, undermine the Camp David peace process.

The American Jewish Committee welcomes the Panel's "absolute support" of the right of the State of Israel to exist as a Jewish state in peace within secure and recognized borders We are gratified at the Panel's recognition that "a major obstacle to peace in the Middle East has been the unwillingness of Arab states and the Palestinian Arabs to recognize Israel's right to selfdetermination as a Jewish state which deserves the respect of the entire family of nations "

On the other hand, it is regrettable that the NCC Panel should recommend that our government engage in dialogue with the PLO and press for Palestinian self-determination without any pre-conditions and without their <u>first</u> renouncing terrorism. This can only strengthen the PLO's belief that its aims can be achieved without any change in its policies but rather through U.S. pressure on Israel

Inasmuch as the Camp David agreements have broken the tragic and senseless cycle of war and terrorism the NCC and all the world abhors, the AJC deeply regrets that the Panel should see fit to describe these agreements as "fundamentally flawed " We profoundly believe that Christian leaders must support and encourage this first realistic peace plan to emerge in thirty years of Middle East conflict, and urge our government -- and the American people -to stand firmly behind them.

A number of recommendations of the Panel's report are to be commended We would certainly hope that its call for "a public commitment by the PLO to cease all acts of violence and renounce its rejection of the existence of Israel" will find a resonance throughout the Arab world Gratifying, too, is the Panel's declaration that the same standards must be applied to all Middle East countries in judging questions of human rights

There is a serious imbalance in certain other elements of the report as, for example, where the Panel demands that Israel change its West Bank settlement policy or suffer U S Government re-evaluation of its policies toward Israel Such a demand constitutes a form of intimidation that would vitiate the U S role and jeopardize the peace process.

The American Jewish Committee wishes to acknowledge the integrity of the effort by the NCC Panel to acquaint itself firsthand with the complex realities of the Middle East situation We recognize that the report represents a serious attempt on the part of the NCC to contribute to the cause of peace and reconciliation in the Middle East.

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#### 1980

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# NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

#### Policy Statement on

## THE MIDDLE EAST

## (Proposed)

#### INTRODUCTION

The Middle East is a land of borders, borders both of space and time, 1 physical borders and borders of the spirit. Because Africa, Asia and Europe 2 converge here, it has been from time immemorial a region where differing 3 4 cultures touch and mingle, and where competing political and economic enterests clash. History lives with a special intensity in the consciousness of 5 Middle Eastern peoples, for they must live with the enduring consequences of 6 their past. Much of that history is a record of conquest from without, 7 betrayal from within. The very name we use for the region bespeaks a Euro-8 9 pean and Western outlook. Many of the lines on its maps were placed there by builders of empires, makers of colonies, to advance the interests of dis-10 tant capitals of commerce and in fulfillment of global strategies of domina-11 tion. The situation today is not different. Great powers, neighboring and 12 remote, compete for political and economic advantage in the area, often with 13 little regard for the needs and aspirations of indigenous cultures and peoples 14 The most recent development affecting the region -- the deepening dependence of 15 nations large and small outside the region upon its reserves of fossil fuels 16 17 --works to exacerbate these tendencies toward intervention and exploitation. Economic rivalry is made fiercer, more destabilizing, by ideological conten-18 tion and geopolitical maneuvering. To U.S. Christians and all people of 19 20 faith, the importance of the Middle East imposes a reponsibility for continuing thoughtful reflection and for prudent and persevering action. What 21 22 U.S. Christians say and do and think about the problems of the Middle East or 23 what they fail to do may deeply affect their own future and the future of the 24 world. It may make the difference between the achievement of justice and 25 peace on one hand or continuing conflict, decline and world-endangering war.

By their very nature, the National Council of the Churches of Christ, USA and its member communions are called to address the situation of the peoples of the Middle East and its implications for humankind. The issues inherent in the situation are not only ideological, commercial, political and strategic, they are also issues of profound moral consequence which demand a response from Christians--not least from the Christians of a nation that pursues its own interests in and has its own agenda for the region.

There is a further reason for their special concern about the Middle East. This region contains the Holy Land. Jesus Christ walked and taught and suffered, died and arose from the dead there. Judaism, Christianity and Islam were born in the Middle East and coexist there still, often in an uneasy tension that is felt in the midst of U.S. religious communities as well. Recent events have made clear that differing religious loyalties and perspectives powerfully influence the course of events in the Middle East. Jews, Christians 40 and Muslims form separate communities of faith in the one God, yet harbor dif-41 ferent understandings of how faith is to be expressed in life. To some, for 42 example, it seems natural and right that the national life of a religious 43 people should become the expression in law of a people's fidelity to God, to 44 others, national structures provide a framework within which people of differ-45 ing faiths may live and function and together shape national life and identity.

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This statement provides guidance to the National Council of the Churches of Christ, USA and its member communions in their relationships with the Middle East. It does not presume to tell the people of the Middle East what they should do or believe. Rather, it deals with the responsibility of U.S. Christians to the churches of the Middle East, to people of other faiths, to the government of the United States and to corporations and other agencies as they interact on concerns that touch the lives of people in the Middle East.

53 This policy statement is founded upon our conviction that "there is one 54 God" of all people, "who is Lord of all, works through all and is in all" 55 (Eph. 4 6, TEV). God to whom Christians point in Jesus Christ is at work in every society, we do not fully grasp the ways, but God is not without witness 56 57 in any human community. Here Christians acknowledge a profound mystery the awareness of God's redemptive action for the whole creation in Jesus Christ. 58 59 Through this act, Christians have been called into a community, the Church, 60 to care for the creation, to be the first fruits of God's kingdom, to be a 61 sign and symbol of the unity of all humankind. The Church, the Body of Christ, 62 witnesses to the unity of creation with the Creator, and to the unity of all 63 peoples in the Creator. When the Church is truly Christ's church, through it 64 the grace of God heals the brokenness of human relationships, breaks down 65 separating walls, reconciles estranged persons with God and one another. The 66 experience of this grace imposes a mission: Christians bear reponsibility for a prophetic, pastoral and reconciling ministry in the world. It is out 67 68 of this Christian self-understanding that this statement proceeds.

The first section of the statement affirms the National Council of the Churches of Christ, USA's and its member communions' special concern for relations with Middle Eastern Christians, their need and their willingness to learn from the churches of the region.

The second section explores the relations of U.S. Christians with all peoples of faith living in the Middle East or concerned for its destiny. Affirming the need for mutual respect and understanding, it acknowledges the reality of strife, it seeks to identify the sources of mistrust and prejudice and to lay the basis for reconciliation.

The third section rises out of the responsibility of the NCCCUSA and its member communions to serve as agents of moral discourse, along with other agencies and communities in the U.S., in the effort to understand specific problems and issues of the region and to form sound and workable policies. The statement calls upon U.S. Christians to recognize the moral dimensions of political action, to give witness to God's justice, love and mercy, to build peace upon the foundation of justice.

To be the Body of Christ requires of the Church an openness to the Spirit, an awareness of historic opportunity, a willingness to engage in continuing, many-sided dialogue, and a patient firmness in the defense of human and transcendent values. This calling asks U.S. Christians to accept responsibility for action in the world, it also requires continuing effort to manifest more 90 visibly their oneness in Christ, to reach out to their neighbors of other 91 faiths and to work together with them for peace and justice. It is in that 92 spirit that this document is offered.

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# RELATIONS AMONG THE CHURCHES

In the Middle East the ministry and witness of the churches are carried on by five families of churches. Eastern Orthodox; Oriental Orthodox, Protestant/Anglican; Catholic, both Roman and Eastern Rite, and the Church of the East (Assyrian). These churches vary in size, resources and other characterjistics. Most are reduced in numbers today as a result of emigration from the area, a few, however, such as the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt with its more than 7,000,000 members, are larger than some major U.S. communions.

102 The majority of Christians of the Middle East, being of the Eastern 103 Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox communions, trace a continuous witness of their 104 churches to the time of the apostles, they carry on a tradition that has nur-105 tured the fellowship of Christian believers through two millennia.

106 The Protestant/Anglican churches, a small minority of the Middle East 107 churches, have their roots in the European reformation tradition, carried to 108 the Middle East as part of the 19th century western mission enterprise. While 109 one stated purpose of the western missionary enterprise was to encourage re-110 newal in the existing churches of the Middle East, many of the missionaries 111 understood themselves as coming to be of service to the people and to win souls 112 to Jesus Christ. In any event, however, these Protestant/Anglican churches, as well as the Catholic churches of both the Eastern and Roman Rites, origin-113 114 ally drew their members principally from Orthodox communions. Gaps in cul-115 tural and historical understanding among early western missionaries, despite 116 their good intentions, led to misperceptions of the existing churches. Crea-117 tion of new churches rather than renewal of existing churches was the result.

118 The divisiveness which resulted has left its scars. Even today a number 119 of missionary groups, many based in the United States but active in the Middle 120 East, continue a style of proselytism that tends toward fragmentation rather 121 than unity among the churches of the Middle East. The majority of the area's 122 churches, however, now place a high priority on the furthering of Christian unity in their continued life and witness. This spirit of reconciliation and healing found expression in the creation of the Middle East Council of Churches 123 124 125 in 1974. The Council brings together three of the families of Middle East 126 churches: the Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox and a majority of the Prot-127 estant/Anglican. Its founding represents a major historical development with 128 great significance for theology and mission.

Just as the Middle East Council of Churches is contributing to a deeper sense of unity among its members, the National Council of the Churches of Christ, USA and its member communions are increasingly aware of the contribution they can make as partner churches toward enhancing the spirit of unity in the Middle East.

The NCCCUSA and its member communions are called to recognize that the basic principle guiding relations between Middle East and United States churches is that the Middle East churches provide the essential witness to Christ in the Middle East. The role of the U.S. churches in this witness is 138 to be supportive of Middle East churches. At least among the member churches 139 of the MECC and the NCCCUSA, this is a relationship of partners who are called 140 to express their unity in Christ. The relationship presumes the equality of 141 the partners in every respect and evokes a spirit of mutuality among these 142 various members of the Body of Christ.

Given this basic understanding, it is clear that a chief responsibility of the National Council of the Churches of Christ, USA is to nurture a variety of relationships, formal and informal, designed to foster unity and mutual understanding among U.S. and Middle East churches. The geographical considerations that informed past mission comity agreements of the western Protestant/Anglican churches, while a sign of western Christian cooperation in their time, are no longer appropriate now when Middle East evangelical churches have developed their own unity and autonomy. Future relationships should give evidence of unity and mutual respect among the churches.

Further, these new relationships must be marked by a degree of mutuality seldom seen in the past. Just as U.S. churches may play a supportive role to Middle East churches in their own region, the NCCCUSA along with the MECC should encourage a supportive role of Middle East churches to U.S. churches within the United States. Beyond existing bilateral relations, church-tochurch contacts should be developed and conciliar relations strengthened. Efforts should be made to create mutual relations across the historic ties of the several families of churches.

160 Toward these ends, the National Council of the Churches of Christ, USA 161 recognizes the following guidelines and tasks and encourages its member com-162 munions to adopt them:

a) In any witness or work that may have a direct bearing on Middle
 East Christians, the NCCCUSA and its member communions have a responsibility
 to consult with the churches of the Middle East.

b) The NCCCUSA must take initiative to encourage joint planning by its member communions and the creation of a holistic, integrated approach to issues of justice and peace and the various tasks of service, evangelism, interfaith relations, education and theological study in relation to the Middle East.

171 c) The NCCCUSA and its member communions have a responsibility to share 172 with others the information, interpretation and insights drawn out of its 173 relationships with churches of the Middle East and to make known the rich 174 heritage of Christian communities of the region.

175 Of themselves, these guidelines, however helpful, will not create the 176 community we seek unless they are observed in a spirit of love, trust and 177 sincerity and with constant attention to the goal of witness to the churches' 178 oneness in Christ.

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180 RELATIONS WITH PEOPLE OF OTHER FAITHS

181 The Middle East is the spiritual homeland of three major monotheistic

182 religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In the past few decades the 183 attention of the whole world has been drawn in an unprecedented way to the 184 vitality of all three faiths in the region. At the same time these three 185 faiths have encountered one another in new ways, both in the context of peace 186 and in the midst of violence.

187 For U.S. Christians, recognition of these new religious dynamics under-188 scores the urgency of gaining fuller understanding of the three religious 189 communities as they are present not only in the Middle East but also in other 190 parts of the world. This awareness also presses Christians to gain a deeper 191 grasp of their own faith and of its resources for dealing with Middle East 192 issues. Recent events make clear that people of faith may have new roles to 193 play in deciding issues of global consequence. This requires close attention 194 to western Christian religious/cultural assumptions about the role of religion 195 in the world and their relation to the Christian faith.

196 There are important similarities among these three faiths. All three 197 affirm God, who is sovereign and one. The sacred literature of each shares points of identity and similarity with those of the others. On the other 198 199 hand, deep tensions have arisen out of Christian and Muslim notions that the 200 revelation granted them is a corrective fulfillment of that which was granted 201 to those before them. Moreover, Christians, Muslims and Jews often hold false 202 Images of one another and treat one another with contempt or hatred to the 203 point of violence and oppression. Such stereotypes and attitudes still exist 204 among U.S. Christians with shallow understanding of their own faith and dis-205 torted understanding of other faiths, and who lack personal encounter with 206 believers in Islam and Judaism.

In the West, all people of Middle East origins, regardless of religion, have for centuries been seen through the prism of prejudice. In part this bias has arisen out of ignorance and xenophobia, nevertheless, it has served to rationalize the imperialist and colonialist ventures of some western countries.

Images of Jews have been distorted by Christians from earliest times, and have resulted in an anti-semitism demonstrated most clearly in the Holocaust and are still widespread among Christians and others in the U.S. today.

Images of Muslims often lack any dimension of legitimate and sincere religious belief. Some Americans, in their ignorance, actually think of Islam as an embodiment of hatred that has acted as a demonic force throughout history.

Taken in sum, this undeniable record of human failing severely undercuts every effort of U.S. Christians today to join with the peoples of the Middle East in the search for truth. It hinders every program intended to contribute effectively to the building of peace and justice. And yet, though sad history damages U.S. Christian credibility, it does not absolve them of responsibility. Whether or not they are worthy, they are involved both as U.S. citizens and as Christians. U.S. Christians are called, then, to repentance and conversion.

A sign of conversion will be shown through a recognition that in this

country anti-semitism and hatred of Muslims are problems of U.S. Christians as well as of the immediate victims. U.S. churches must undertake new programs at every level of life to create a continuous interchange, a candid examination of their deepest historical roots and their most urgent present concerns, and efforts in mutual cooperation building toward understanding and respect.

None of this will be easy. For some U.S Christians it is difficult even to refer to others as "persons of other faiths", they are accustomed to thinking of them as "non-Christians" or "non-believers" Such attitudes have developed out of confidence in the truth of their own faith and out of ignorance of, and insensitivity to, other faiths, to the truths they affirm and the meaning and purpose they create in the lives of people

240 Today, U.S. Christians live in a global society with 14 million Jewish 241 and 750 million Muslim neighbors Many of these are new citizens of 242 United States who came here form the Middle East Any interfaith discussion 243 related to the Middle East must address not only Middle East issues but also 244 the concerns and aspirations of these people and their communities To what 245 extent, for example, do they experience in the U.S. the respect for pluralism that U.S. Christians expect of Muslims and Jews in the Middle East? U.S. 246 247 Christians can learn much about themselves and about persons of other faiths 248 by beginning in their own neighborhoods and communities to develop cooperative 249 relationships with those of differing religious traditions. For the NCCCUSA, 250 one conclusion that follows this consideration is that commitment to take 251 these interfaith relationships and issues seriously must be reflected sub-252 stantively in the Council's life and program.

Interfaith explorations will involve both scholarly exchanges and existential encounters. Scholarly exchanges are valuable in correcting centuries of misunderstanding. Special insights into each other's view will result from such studies. If, however, these dialogues remain remote from the pressing needs and problems which arise from day-to-day interfaith encounters, interfaith relationships will be denied the wisdom of such helpful reflection.

At times when commitment to particular ethnic, religious, and political perspectives heightens the intensity of conflict, there is a danger that persons will evidence behavior which demeans the motives and perspectives of the other parties

While such committed advocacy is perhaps natural as an inevitable consequence of the human condition, it nevertheless violates the best instincts and traditions of all three faiths Particularly with issues of the Middle East, religious commitment can sometimes exacerbate rather than ease such conflict. In current as in past history, there is much to remind us that things done in the name of serving God can flow out of human pride, fear and blindness.

Theological discussion, with a bearing on the Middle East, must be carried out in relation to the pressing human struggles that are occurring there. Human lives and human freedom are at stake in the clash of words over ethical/ political norms and religious absolutes. If possibilities of reconciliation are to be discovered, Christians need the grace of God They also need patience They must make a serious commitment to inquiry, and to candor They must abjure the use of religious claims for ulterior, dehumanizing purposes.

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Such a self-critical stance is wholly in keeping with the best of Christian self-understanding, with the command of Christ that His followers love their neighbors (cf. Luke 10:25) and with the awareness that the Lord still has much to teach His followers (cf. John 15:12). Christians understand themselves as pilgrims in search of deeper understanding of God and of the truth given in Christ, and therefore open to that theological insight and enrichment of experience that persons of other faiths can provide.

284 Jesus lived and taught in that very region of the earth where the encounter of persons as neighbors is today most difficult. The conflict there is 285 286 divisive here as well. as Christians, Jews and Muslims in the United States 287 see the Middle East through different prisms. Theological and religious dif-288 ferences affect and are affected by political, economic, cultural, ethnic and 289 social differences The difficulty is heightened still more by other factors 290 the world's critical dependence upon the oil resources of the region, the 291 close juxtaposition of competing power blocs, the bitter residue of past wars, 292 the suspicion and fear bred by real and imagined threats, the resentment against 293 continuing wrongs and deprivations.

Acknowledging the difficulties does not mean abandoning hope but rather is a call to measure the scope of the effort against the dimensions of the task For all, Muslims, Jews and Christians, it is through faith that love and freedom are possible. It is the mission of people of faith to project a vision of the future in which errors and wrongs of the past can be overcome, hurts healed, hostility and fear replaced by a measure of trust.

300 If religious people affirm the will to peace, they will free their polit-301 ical imagination and tap the creativity of others.

Middle East Christians have an existential relationship with persons of other faiths, particularly Muslims, that few U.S. Christians have ever shared or can share. Therefore, Christians in the United States should look to the Christians of the Middle East for help and guidance in the search for understanding. At the same time, relationships between Christians, Muslims and Jews in the U.S. have an impact in the Middle East Therefore, Christians in that area can enrich their own ministry to the degree that they participate in these relationships.

310 In practical terms, the considerations set forth above call upon the 311 National Council of Churches of Christ, USA to take these steps

a) Encourage its member communions and related conciliar bodies to develop with the Council a more comprehensive, integrated and cohesive approach to relationships among people of different faiths at all levels of church life in the United States

b) Initiate studies which will examine the theological bases of Christian relationships with people of other faiths, articulating the similarities and clarifying so far as possible the differences of understanding

319 c) Advocate the civil rights of religious and ethnic minorities in the 320 United States.

d) Foster in consultation with the World Council of Churches and the Middle East Council of Churches those relationships with religious leaders 323 and communities of the Middle East which will enhance understanding and good 324 will and will work toward the achievement of social justice and peace.

325 The creations of new programs, the allocation of resources and the assign-326 ment of personnel will not of themselves bring about a new era of interfaith understanding. Deepening interfaith understanding will depend in part upon 327 whether, as they launch this effort, U.S. Christians fear encounter with other 328 329 believers as risking dilution or disturbance of their own faith, or welcome it 330 as assuring their enrichment. It will also depend in part upon how fully they 331 accept the relevance of their religion and other religions to the great ques-332 tions of war and peace, justice and freedom that are posed for all humankind 333 by the situation in the Middle East If U S Christians come to interfaith 334 encounter with a clear commitment to Jesus Christ the Risen Lord and accept 335 the risks and welcome the opportunities involved, it may be that in this new 336 approach they can rediscover the unity that the one just and sovereign God, 337 through grace, offers to Jew, Muslim and Christian alike. 338

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# THE WITNESS OF THE CHURCH IN SOCIETY

340 Historically, religious bodies in American society have accepted (even 341 asserted) responsibility for initiating and sustaining moral discourse on 342 public issues of justice and political responsibility. It would be arrogant to pretend they have always acted in unity, or that religious people and their 343 institutions in interaction with the rest of society have shown themselves 344 345 exempt from racism, cultural blindness and class prejudice, from the instinct 346 to pursue their own interests and aggrandizement, from the coercive use of 347 Yet the religious community as such possesses an angle of vision power 348 which is different from that of the political party, the university, the re= 349 search institute.

350 The Christian community understands itself to be a community of con-351 science. Belief in a just and loving God is expected to have consequences of 352 human relationships. Group egotism, the complexity of events, the human fear of strangers and limited education regarding other cultures and their histor-353 354 ies make it difficult to bring an informed conscience to bear on issues of 355 policy, the more difficult, the more necessary Christians, like other peoples, can sow the seeds of justice or of injustice, and they will reap the 356 357 harvest they plant. The Christian community, committed to a God of love and 358 justice, historically and today seeks to identify and lift up ethical issues 359 and to go beyond technical and material considerations in an effort to focus 360 the public debate on human issues.

361 None of this is to say that "religion" supplies authoritative answers 362 to policy questions. Religious leaders must struggle like all others for 363 breadth and depth of comprehension, and for hearing The community of con-364 science may be at one in accepting the relevance of faith to policy, but it is 365 rarely united in its understanding of what faith requires in particular situa-366 But the fact of division does not impose a duty of silence tions It does 367 impose a duty to reflect carefully, to listen sensitively to one another, to 368 conduct debates according to high standards and to be as clear and concise as 369 possible in ambiguous situations.

370 The response of the religious community ought to be more than moralizing, 371 more than the insertion of ethical principle into formation of policy At 372 best it can be the response of the community of faith in witness to and praise 373 of God's sovereign and redemptive involvement in human history

Fundamental definitions of world order, human rights and national integrity are being tested by the unique dynamics of the Middle East. The continuing tensions in the area and the frequent eruption of minor and major crises reflect the rivalries of power blocs, of competing ideologies, of religions and of nationalities. Existing international machinery for resolving conflict and for defending the rights of peoples is under-utilized or circumvented

381 The United States government has said the region is vital to U.S. inter-382 ests--economic, political and military The historic US involvement in the 383 region is made more intense by the dependence of the United States and its 384 allies on the oil resources of the region Continuing commitment to the State 385 of Israel is also affected by that dependence of the United States and its 386 allies on the oil resources of the region The proximity of the Soviet Union 387 and uncertainty about its future intentions, tribal and national rivalries, 388 and the importance of free access to shipping lanes affect perceptions of U S 389 foreign policy options Awareness of U S dependence and vulnerability seem 390 to create a frustration and rage that sees only military action as an affirma-391 tion of the nations's strength and power

The role of the religious community is to help its members and in fact all of society to be sensitive to long range issues as well as short range, to consider the needs and rights of the peoples of the Middle East as well as their own needs, and to recognize that military action may trigger a war which could devastate not only the Middle East but the whole of humankind 397

#### OVERARCHING CONCERNS

399 The following section provides guidelines that may be applicable for 400 other unresolved conflicts within the Middle East, including the struggle 401 for Lebanese national identity, the struggle of Kurds and other ethnic groups 402 for national existence, a divided Cyprus, sporadic warfare between the two 403 Yemens, guerrilla warfare in Dhofar and the necessity of improving protection 404 of ethnic and religious communities throughout the region The nature of the 405 conflicts relates in part to the question of self-determination for ethnic 406 groups in a post-colonial Middle East as well as to the continued involvement 407 of outside powers seeking to further their own strategic and economic inter-408 ests

The U S churches have an important role to play in helping to sensitize their constituencies to these situations and the role which the U S government and other governments may be playing Whether the conflict is due to internal or external pressures, the U S churches should continue to serve as advocates of justice and peace, agents of reconciliation and meeting essential human needs of people

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#### 1 Self-Determination

The Middle East is made up of "nation-states" that came into being in a variety of ways Some have existed for centuries Others were created by western colonial powers with little concern for ethnic, religious or other historic considerations. In some instances communities of natural affinity were put asunder, in other instances states lacking a sense of national 422 identity were formed, thereby all but guaranteeing internal conflict and in-423 stability An additional burden was created in some cases by the imposition 424 of alien governmental forms and of leaders owing more allegiance to the 425 colonial power than to their own people

426 In the wake of colonialism it was inevitable that these precariously 427 constituted states would suffer crises of identity and conflicts over sover-428 eignty Established states have been continually challenged by groups sharing 429 historic, ethnic, cultural or religious bonds and therefore harboring national 430 aspirations Though the inherent legitimacy of such aspirations is recognized 431 by international law--"All peoples have the right to self-determination"--the 432 international community lacks adequate criteria to define the right in par-433 ticular instances and procedures for its peaceful and just implementation

A claim to self-determination implies a claim to land controlled by others, so that a claim of one group to the right to self-determination inevitably puts that group into conflict with others who see the same territory as their and own

438 Determining the *justice* of claims to self-determination is one step in 439 the negotiations leading to the settlement of conflicting claims Developing 440 criteria for determining what is just has been and continues to be a responsi-441 bility of the human community Recognition of the justice of a claim to self-442 determination can be an important step in the reconciliation of differences 443 between competing claims An appropriate role for the National Council of the 444 Churches of Christ, USA is to help give a hearing to claims for self-determina-445 tion, assessing the justice of each and when possible seeking the compromises 446 necessary to reconciliation and peace Where there are conflicting claims, 447 there must be an openness to compromise if armed conflict is to be avoided

448 Those claiming the right to self-determination are usually those who 449 perceive themselves as the oppressed Giving voice to the voiceless, provid-450 ing support for the powerless when their claims are believed to be just and 451 working for relationships of equality and mutual trust are practical ways the 452 National Council of the Churches of Christ, USA and its member communions can 453 express their commitment to justice Recognizing the intellectual and legal 454 difficulties of defining standards by which competing claims can be judged, 455 the NCCCUSA should give leadership in the pursuit of this demanding work

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# 2 The Rights of Minorities in Middle Eastern Cultures

458 Despite the existence of international agreements defining the rights of 459 persons and minority communities over against the powers of states, these 460 rights are in fact understood differently in differing cultures Where the 461 distinction between religion and politics so valued in this country are not affirmed, and where peoples define themselves and their states in specific-462 ally religious terms, the very notion of pluralism is either unacceptable or 463 464 interpreted in radically different ways Throughout the Middle East there 465 are states in which political and religious authority are identified or com-466 bined in various degrees

It is not possible, wise nor right for the peoples of the West in im-468 pose a single mode of dealing with the rights of minorities The establish-469 ment by outsiders of a secular pluralist democracy would imply to some an 470 acceptance of atheism or indifferentism Even specifically religious or theo-471 cratic states have usually legally recognized the fact of pluralism within 472 their own borders and have affirmed the sacredness of personal and community 473 rights, yet basic human rights are continually violated in varying degrees in 474 all countries, including the USA. It is a task of the religious community, 475 alone or in cooperation with others committed to justice, to monitor such vio-476 lations, to call oppressive powers to account and to assist the victims of 477 oppression. The best proof of the integrity of concern of the United States' 478 Christian community will be given when it attends to violations of human 479 rights by its own governments (national, state and local) and to institutions, 480 especially when the victims are identified in the public mind with unpopular 481 causes, as was the case in World War II with Japanese Americans and, more 482 recently, with Iranian students What people in the U.S. do with respect to 483 human rights can well affect and influence the attitudes and actions of the 484 people of the Middle East

485 Questions of self-determination, of human rights and human dignity, of 486 respect for minorities in every kind of social order including the fundamental right of minorities to worship and to practice their religion, belong to the 487 488 very fabric of world order It is wrong to treat them as moralistic concerns, 489 ideals to be preached at all times but practiced only when larger, more "real-490 istic" considerations permit Definitions of human rights not implemented in 491 society may be worse than useless They provoke bitterness and disillusion-492 ment among the powerless, and teach them to rely on terror and violence rather 493 than to put their trust in the considence of the human community It is the 494 responsibility of individual Christians, churches and ecumenical bodies to per-495 severe in raising these issues in the public forum with respect to violations 496 of rights and liberties in the USA and throughout the world where perceived 497 interests of the U S government or corporations are blocking the full achieve-498 ment of human rights

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# 3 The Arms Race, Security and Justice

501 It is the position of the National Council of the Churches of Christ, USA 502 that lasting global security is the product of just relationships To be understood as just, and to be acceptable in terms of practical wisdom, the policies 503 504 of the NCCCUSA and of the U S government must be addressed not to the preser-505 vation of an existing status quo or to the advancement of U S. interests at 506 the expense of other peoples, but rather to the redress of existing wrongs 507 through more equitable economic systems and by orderly juridical and political 508 The U S can and should contribute more than it now is to the processes 509 strengthening of existing international mechanisms for such purposes and to 510 developing new procedures for the peaceful accommodation of inevitable change 511 Peaceful means of settling disputes are necessary to the survival of the peo-512 ple of the Middle East For decades, and increasingly in recent months and 513 years, the most favored and visible means the U S has used to preserve peace 514 in the Middle East has been to supply weapons of war Armaments in great 515 quantities have been provided to competing nations as incentives for making 516 agreements acceptable to the United States and calculated to serve U S in-517 terests Arms are also sold to offset otherwise unfavorable trade balances 518 This is a deadly, self-perpetuating cycle It imposes strain on Middle East 519 economies, reduces their capacity to meet basic human needs, tends to increase 520 the influence of the military and makes war more likely Arms transfers by 521 the major arms suppliers to Middle East nations escalate the danger of war 522 No country, not even the United States, can credibly be a major arms supplier 523 and be perceived as a strong advocate for peace.

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The United States is not alone at fault Other arms-producing states-

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both East and West, compete for influence and money through the supply of arm-525 aments and military training Superpower rivalries, ideological conflict and 526 manipulation to assure oil supplies or strategic advantage lead to constant 527 528 interference in the internal affairs of Middle East states Transnational 529 corporations seek to influence state policies in their own interests A11 530 these agents acting in conflict tend toward destabilization of the region that 531 could lead to catastrophic consequences In sum, outside interests are imposing a massive injustice on the peoples of the Middle East 532

533 What the region most needs is a comprehensive settlement of major issues 534 now in conflict A foundation stone of any such settlement will be firm and 535 open agreement by outside parties that no one of them or any group of them 536 will seek to impose itself as dominant in the region Specifically, the Middle 537 East ought not be a U S nor a Soviet "sphere of influence" The protection 538 of what the major powers understand as their vital interests when secured at 539 the expense of the welfare--or worse, the lives--of the people of the Middle 540 East is unjust and immoral When the protection of outside interests is inter-541 preted as protection of the peoples of the Middle East, it is rejected unless 542 it actually coincides with the interests of a particular group or nation Such 543 protection creates ill will toward and distrust of the self-proclaimed "pro-544 tection" Self-determination is, by definition, not established by outsiders

545 It is the position of the National Council of the Churches of Christ, USA 546 that the comprehensive settlement to be sought can best be achieved by negoti-547 ations conducted through existing international organs or an ad hoc interna-548 tional authority in which all concerned parties are fairly represented By 549 proposing or supporting an initiative toward such negotiations, the United 550 States would be able to work both for a just peace and for continuing access 551 to oil more honorably and more successfully than by purchasing allies with arms 552 and by accepting limited settlements that ignore but do not suppress remaining 553 inhustices

554 There is already considerable recognition that the best interests of the 555 United States depend not only on access to Middle East oil but on major energy 556 conservation and the development of both alternative and domestic energy 557 sources The use of military means to settle differences uses vast energy re-558 sources, destroys production facilities and sets up new antagonisms There-559 fore, the best interests of the United States and of the peoples of the Middle 560 East both depend upon just, peaceful solutions of conflicting claims, the re-561 duction of tension and the recognition of mutual interdependence

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## 4 Israel and the Palestinians

564 The continuing Israel-Palestine conflict has roots that reach far back into 565 history, to recall those events rightly brings shame to many, including the 566 Christians of Europe and the United States Both ancient and recent memories continue to inflict wounds and insecurities on the two peoples most 567 568 closely involved The complexities of the situation are greatly magnified 569 by differing, fiercely held perspectives from which it is viewed Yet it is 570 possible to discern facts and principles on which a just and lasting peace 571 could be founded.

A major destabilizing element in the Middle East continues to be the conflict over the land of Israel-Palestine, between the nationalisms of the Israeli Jews and the Palestinian Arabs and the related conflicts, which in575 volve surrounding Arab states and which affect the relations of the major 576 powers This conflict, while regionally focused, poses sufficient threat to 577 world peace that it deserves special treatment in any overall consideration 578 of the Middle East.

579 At the heart of any solution of the Israel-Palestine conflict is a recog-580 nition that the struggle is one between two nationalisms, between two peoples 581 wishing to organize society so that one group constitutes a majority for its 582 own benefit and protection For the Zionist Jew, the state should have a Jew-583 ish majority and a distinctly Jewish character For the Palestinian Arab, the 584 state should have an Arab majority and cultural milieu In each case, many 585 questions remain unanswered, but chief among these is the role of the minority 586 in the Jewish state as well as in any proposed Palestinian Arab state There 587 are religious as well as political elements to these unanswered questions

588 The National Council of the Churches of Christ, USA considers the follow-589 ing affirmations as essential to a resolution of the Palestine-Israel conflict 590 and the related Arab-Israel conflicts

a) Cessation of all acts of violence by all parties,

592 b) Recognition by the Arab states and by the Palestinian Arabs of 593 Israel as a Jewish state with secure, defined and recognized borders,

594 c) Recognition by Israel of the right of national self-determination 595 for the Palestinian Arabs and of their right to select their own representa-596 tives and to establish a Palestinian entity, including a sovereign state,

d) Agreement on and creation of a mode of enforcement of international guarantees for the sovereign and secure borders of Israel and of any Palestinian entity established as part of the peace process,

600 e) Constructive solutions to the problems of refugees and persons dis-601 placed as a result of the Israel-Palestine and related conflicts dating from 602 1948, including questions of compensation and return.

Numerous proposals have been put forth and forums suggested in which a solution could be achieved. The Egyptian-Israeli Treaty of 1978 growing out of the Camp David Agreements has led to a partial solution to the conflicts as it removes the largest of Israel's Arab adversaries from the field of battle. The partial nature of the Camp David Agreements, particularly as they address the Palestinian issue, indicates the necessity of an overall framework for a comprehensive peace, even if this goal is achieved in steps.

610 Whatever the final formulations of a settlement, the articles of the United 611 Nations' Universal Bill of Human Rights, Security Council Resolutions 242 (1967) 612 and 338 (1973) should be the basis for any firm and lasting peace between 613 Israelis and the Palestinians.

Peace, justice and reconciliation are not advanced by polemical and ac-615 cusatory rhetoric, implanting of suspicion, nurturing of old resentment, re-616 fusal to meet one another nor by other acts that destroy trust.

617 It is essential that U.S. Christians recognize the real needs and aspir-618 ations of both Israelis and Palestinians and that justice for both requires 619 justice for each. Peace and justice depend upon bold initiatives by all 620 parties seeking new options, risking courses of action which one cannot now 621 imagine, but out of which may emerge a common vision of justice. 622

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# Conclusion

624 The Middle East is the place where the Church began its life. Current 625 complexities in the Middle East help U.S Christians to face their own ques-626 tioning of what it means to be a witnessing community to the world, and that 627 their salvation must not be perceived only in individualist terms but in terms of the whole creation. U.S Christians must not only proclaim the unity of 628 629 creation and of humankind, they must also imagine and pursue ways of solid-630 ifying and celebrating that unity. U.S. Christians have much to learn from the churches and other peoples of faith in the Middle East in this task 631

632 The people of God are called to be caretakers of creation. This is an 633 active, not a passive or reactive, role. The National Council of Churches 634 of Christ, USA and its member communions, if faithful to this role, may facil-635 itate a new era of human encounter in their relations to the Middle East. To 636 be the Body of Christ requires an openness to the Spirit, an awareness of historic opportunity, a radical understanding of life within the kingdom of God 637 both present and becoming It is a vision of unity expressed first and most 638 powerfully in the sacrament of communion through which the incarnate Christ is 639 640 revealed to the community and the community becomes that Body of Christ in 641 service to the world.

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### A Response to the National Council of Churches Proposed Middle East Policy Statement

## Prepared by the Interreligious Affairs Department of the American Jewish Committee, New York City

June 1980

The first two-thirds of the document deals with the "divisiveness" that has sometimes characterized the relationship between Western churches and Middle Eastern Christians The proposed Policy Statement expresses regret and contrition for the "scars" that have resulted from this unhappy history, and calls for true partnership between the two branches of Christianity Clearly, the call for equality between Eastern and Western churches is an internal Christian consideration, springing from a laudable ecumenical impulse

However, we remind our American Christian colleagues that the official report of the NCC's Middle Eastern Panel called attention to "the theological differences that still exist within the Christian community over the meaning of the Abrahamic covenant and the continuing role of the Jewish people." The report commented "Most Panel members saw that some theological positions, when combined with the political dynamics of the area, could be understood as what the West would call anti-semitism. Thus, the seeds of religious alienation can be carried through the churches themselves " We hope that the respect and understanding for Judaism which has developed in recent years among Western Christians will not be jeopardized by exposure to attitudes which, whether theologically or politically motivated, are hostile to the Jewish people

The last third of the document is focused on the Arab-Israeli conflict. As presently written, the Statement contains some positive elements along with certain troubling statements and recommendations that we regard as potentially threatening to Israel's security

The NCC document makes five specific recommendations

- (a) Cessation of all acts of violence by all parties,
- (b) Recognition by the Arab States and by the Palestinian Arabs of Israel as a Jewish state with secure, defined, and recognized borders
- (c) Recognition by Israel of the right of national self-determination for the Palestinian Arabs and of their right to select their own representatives and to establish a Palestinian entity, including a sovereign state,
- (d) Agreement on and creation of a mode of international guarantees for the sovereign and secure borders of Israel and of any Palestinian entity established as part of the peace process,
- (e) Constructive solutions to the problems of refugees and persons displaced as a result of the Israel-Palestine and related conflicts dating from 1948, including questions of compensation and return (Lines 591-602)

Among the recommendations and other items considered in the proposed statement, there are a number we view as constructive contributions The NCC's call for Arab States and Palestinian Arabs to recognize "Israel as a Jewish state with secure, defined, and recognized borders" is especially welcome. The recommendation on the "problems of refugees" is fair-minded, because it is not limited solely to the Arab refugees of the various Arab-Israeli wars Jewish refugees who fled Arab countries as well as all other Middle Eastern refugees are included in section E.

It is important to note that there is no mention of the Palestine Liberation Organization in the proposed Policy Statement. We urge that the final Policy Statement condemn the PLO for its many acts of terrorism carried out against innocent civilians and for its continued public commitment to the destruction of the State of Israel

Also absent is any mention of the status of Jerusalem or the question of Jewish settlements on the West Bank We find this helpful and appropriate, believing that these two issues can only be resolved through direct negotiations as part of an ongoing peace process

The document is clear and unambiguous in confronting the Christian roots of anti-Semitism, noting that "images of Jews have been distorted by Christians from earliest times, and have resulted in an anti-Semitism demonstrated most clearly in the Holocaust and are still widespread among Christians and others in the U.S. today . in this country anti-Semitism and hatred of Muslims are problems of U.S. Christians. churches must undertake new programs at every level of life to create understanding and respect " (Lines 212-214 and 229-233)

While the proposed Policy Statement also strongly affirms religious, cultural and political pluralism, it also cautions the "peoples of the West not to impose a single mode of dealing with the rights of minorities" thus showing sensitivity to other long-established cultural modalities The document warns that the imposition of a "secular pluralistic democracy" in the Middle East would imply "an acceptance of atheism or indifferentism " (Lines 469-470). The affirmation of Israel as a "Jewish state" represents a positive development in our judgment, and we believe it is imperative that the explicit reference to a Jewish state be retained in the final document

The NCC Policy Statement also notes that the Middle East is filled with many regional conflicts. This recognition is also a positive development since the NCC has, in the past, often focused exclusively on the Arab-Israel conflict The document briefly mentions the problems of Lebanon, the struggle of the Kurdish people, Cyprus, the two Yemens and guerilla warfare in Dhofar.

One of our strongest criticisms of the NCC has been that during the 1973 Yom Kippur War its Governing Board adopted a resolution that called upon the United States and the Soviet Union to cease arms shipments to the Middle East The NCC resolution clearly would have had no impact upon the Soviet government, and thus its net effect might have been to deprive Israel of arms urgently needed for her self-defense at a time of great peril Since the NCC has no real influence upon the Soviet government, the resolution, in reality, was actually directed at Israel's only arms supplier, the United States.

This 1980 document, however, acknowledges that the United States is not alone in "supplying arms to the Middle East." It recognizes that other nations also provide weapons and that "transnational corporations seek to influence state policies in their own interest." (Lines 538-539). The proposed Policy Statement declares that "outside interests are imposing a massive injustice on the peoples of the Middle East." (Lines 531-532)

However, there are a number of problematic elements The reference in section C to a possible Palestinian "sovereign state" is particularly troublesome, insofar as it says nothing to preclude a PLO-Soviet dominated state We strongly urge that this recommendation be omitted from the final text

Just what such a Palestinian state might mean was clearly articulated at a meeting held in Damascus, Syria in May 1980, at the fourth Congress of Al Fatah, the largest and most influential organization in the PLO Al Fatah reaffirmed its commitment to the destruction of Israel, the rejection of any compromise, and the replacement of Israel with a "Palestinian democratic state on all of the Palestinian soil " Al Fatah asserted

"The armed struggle within the occupied land will be escalated across all borders of confrontation with the Zionist enemy Fatah is an independent national revolutionary movement whose aim is to liberate Palestine completely and to liquidate the Zionist entity [Israel] politically, economically, militarily, culturally and ideologically "

In discussing the concept of self-determination, the authors of the Policy Statement admit that the "international community lacks adequate criteria to define the right in particular instances and procedures for its peaceful and just implementation." (Lines 431-433). The proposed Policy Statement recognizes "the intellectual and legal difficulties of defining standards by which competing claims can be judged," (Lines 453-454), and acknowledges that one group's right to self-determination "inevitably puts that group in conflict with others who see the same territory as their own " The document thus recognizes, but never comes to grip with, the reality that claims for Palestinian self-determination frequently imply the destruction of Israel The document is unable to resolve this dilemma, nor does it offer adequate guidelines to ensure that Palestinian self-determination will not be defined in Al Fatah's terms Nor does the NCC document offer adequate guidelines for judging the various claims of self-determination. However, the section on self-determination does describe the NCC's own self-understanding of its role as "giving voice to the voiceless, providing support for the powerless when their claims are believed to be just " (Lines 449-450) The NCC believes that the Palestinians are the "voiceless" and the "powerless" and, thus it feels obligated to present their views in any discussion on selfdetermination There are other peoples in the Middle East seeking selfdetermination, such as the Kurds, yet the NCC does not call for national selfdetermination for them. The repeated emphases only on Palestinians seems disproprotionate to the realities of the entire region.

Another disturbing aspect is the suggestion that because the West and particularly the United States, is dependent on the Middle East oil supplies,

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the U.S. may have to adapt and change its foreign policy. Several examples "The historic U.S. involvement in the region is will illustrate this point made more intense by the dependence of the United States and its allies on the oil reserves of the region. Continuing commitment to the State of Israel is also affected by that dependence of the United States and its allies on the oil resources of the region (Lines 382-386)... Awareness of U.S. dependence and vulnerability (Line 389)...the world's critical dependence upon the oil resources of the region" (Line 290). However, economists have pointed out that the rise in oil prices and the deliberate cutback of oil production are not a result of U.S. Middle East policy. It should be remembered that the Shah of Iran, America's erstwhile ally, was among the leaders who pressed for sharp increases in oil prices.

The Camp David Accords of 1978 are glossed over and given short shrift in the Policy Statement The Accords are mentioned only once in the document "The partial nature of the Camp David Agreements. .has led to a partial solution of the conflicts" (Lines 607 and 605). We believe that the Camp David Accords must be welcomed and affirmed in the document as the fruit of the only existing peace process in the Middle East. For the NCC to limit itself to a grudging acceptance of the Camp David Accords, we believe, is a disservice to the cause of peace. The Camp David Accords have brought about the most important and hopeful move towards peace in the history of the Israeli-Arab conflict.

In the context of the statement, the word "Zionist" seems polemical Lines 582 and 583 read. "For the Zionist Jew the state and mischievous (Israel) should have a Jewish majority and have a distinctly Jewish character " While welcoming the document's reference to Zionism, we believe, however, this sentence reflects a biased and uninformed attitude towards the national liberation movement of the Jewish people Because the NCC has historically been supportive of all other national liberation movements, we urge that this sentence be recast to reflect the universal support of the Zionist ideal by Jewish people everywhere.

To sum up, the document has some positive aspects including the legitimacy of Israel as a Jewish state, the NCC's commitment to religious, cultural and political pluralism, its call to combat anti-Semitism, the attention that it gives to the human rights of minorities in the Middle East, and the recognition that the U.S. is not alone in supplying arms to the Middle East Finally, the ommission of any reference to the PLO, Jerusalem and Jewish settlements is helpful.

On the negative side, the document points to a Palestinian state, which, based on present realities, is likely to be hostile to Israel's very existence. The Policy Statement is vague and selective on the question of self-determination, and it minimizes the importance of the Camp David Accords. It makes a false connection between Middle East oil sources and American policy towards Israel

The American Jewish Committee shares with the National Council of Churches a profound commitment to peace, justice, and reconciliation in the Middle East In the AJC's judgment, the process embodied in the Camp David Accords points to the best way of achieving these goals. The AJC at its 1980 Annual Meeting asserted that "the principal obstacle to Arab-Israeli peace is...the continuing refusal of Arab states other than Egypt to recognize Israel and to negotiate with her within the Camp David framework or on any other terms. Instead, they support the PLO in its commitment to the destruction of Israel." We urge the NCC, in its search for a balanced and fair Policy Statement, not to lose sight of this central issue. rpr

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