



Thames North Synod
Saturday 12 March 2016
10.00 am to 4.00 pm

Paper D1

Thames North Synod resolves that General Assembly be asked to adopt the following resolution:

General Assembly resolves to:

- a) commend the Church of Scotland Report 'The Inheritance of Abraham' (revised version) for study by United Reformed churches.
- b) endorse the conclusion of 'The Inheritance of Abraham' incorporated in the preamble to this motion rejecting claims that scripture offers any peoples a privileged claim for possession of a particular territory.
- c) commend 'A Moment of Truth, a word of faith, hope, and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering, Kairos Palestine 2009' for study by United Reformed Churches and encourage the formation of Kairos communities, either within individual congregations or ecumenically.
- d) urge the UK Government and the European Union to do all that is within their power to ensure that human rights are respected and international law is upheld in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.**
- e) urge the UK Government and the European Union to exert, through sanctions or other effective means that address the inequality of power between the parties, international pressure on Israel to end the occupation of Palestinian territory and the blockade of Gaza and allow a just peace to be achieved.**

Introduction

In May 2013 the Church of Scotland adopted a report "The inheritance of Abraham"

(http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/14050/the_inheritance_of_abraham.pdf) as its "latest reflection on the 'questions that need to be faced' as the political and humanitarian situation in the Holy Land continues to be a source of pain and concern for us all." The report drew on the Church's past reports and 'A Moment of Truth, Kairos Palestine 2009', the document offered as a word of faith, hope and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering (www.kairospalestine.ps) to all the churches and Christians in the world. This motion endorses the key conclusions of the "Inheritance of Abraham" report and adds a corollary about the need to address the inequality in power between Israelis and Palestinians if negotiations are to lead to a just peace for all the people of the Holy Land. It also encourages support for the actions called for in the Kairos Palestine document to achieve these ends.

This motion is a call for justice, reconciliation and peace among all peoples in the Holy Land. This includes the Jewish people living there, for where there is no justice there will be no peace. There will be many Jewish people who disagree with the conclusions about divine right to possession of territory but we hope they will accept that whatever their interpretation of scripture the injustice and suffering endured by the Palestinian people cannot be part of God's will for the land. The resolution's criticisms of the Government of Israel are not criticisms of Jewish people in general and should no more be construed as anti-Jewish than criticism of British Government policy can be construed as anti-British. As Jewish Voice For Peace has said (email on 28-1-16), "As Jews and allies, we need to stand up proudly and declare: criticising Israel is not anti-semitic. Boycotting Israel is not anti-semitic."

/over

(The words of the preamble that follow that quote the “Inheritance of Abraham” report verbatim are written in italics. The additional sentences added for this motion are written in normal script.)

Preamble

From examination of the various views in the Bible about the relation of land to the people of God, we conclude that Christians should not be supporting any claims by any people to an exclusive divine right to possess particular territory. We believe that it is a misuse of the Hebrew Bible (the Christian Old Testament) and the New Testament to use it as a topographic guide to settle contemporary conflicts over land. In the Bible, God’s promises extend in hope to all land and people.

We note that the current situation in the Holy Land is characterised by an inequality in power and therefore reconciliation can only be possible if the Israeli military occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and the blockade of Gaza, are ended, and on that basis we encourage all parties and the international community to resume peace negotiations. For such negotiations to deliver a just peace the inequality in power between the parties must first be counterbalanced by effective international pressure on Israel to end the occupation and blockade. To be effective it must go beyond mere objections and expressions of concern.

The Church of Scotland has urged *the UK Government and the European Union to do all that is within their power to ensure that human rights are respected and international law is upheld in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories* (Inheritance of Abraham, Deliverances). To achieve these ends, with the support of Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem, in the document ‘A Moment of Truth, Kairos Palestine 2009’, Palestinian Christians have advocated a strategy of boycott, disinvestment and sanctions. In such a strategy individuals, corporate entities, financial institutions and governments all have a role to play. In the words of the document “This is not revenge but rather a serious action in order to reach a just and definitive peace that will put an end to Israeli occupation of Palestinian and other Arab territories [the Golan Heights] and will guarantee security and peace for all - liberating both the perpetrators and the victims of injustice” (*Kairos Palestine 2009, paragraph 7 and 4.2.6*).

Originating from a gathering of Christians on Iona in Pentecost week 2012, the document ‘Time for Action’ (<http://www.kairosbritain.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Time-for-Action.pdf>) was published by Kairos Britain as a British Christian response to ‘A Moment of Truth’ and Kairos Britain was inaugurated as a network of individuals and faith communities supporting the actions called for in the Kairos Palestine document.

Kairos Britain calls for establishing Kairos Communities. These can either be Kairos Committed Communities or Kairos Active Communities. Kairos Committed Communities are committed to a just and lasting peace for everyone in Palestine and Israel; pray for those in Israel and Palestine; read and endorse the Kairos Palestine and Kairos Britain documents; encourage others to do so too; and communicate key themes and messages from these documents wherever possible.

Kairos Active Communities take their commitment a stage further. They educate and inspire their own members and the wider community and undertake activities (at least three in the first year) that promote a just and lasting peace in Palestine and Israel, including: praying regularly for a just peace; promoting boycott, disinvestment and sanctions of anything associated with Israel’s occupation; engaging with political representatives; organising visits to Israel/Palestine; and supporting the Palestinian economy by selling Palestinian products.

Kairos communities can be established within individual congregations or ecumenically, or the whole congregation can become a Kairos church.

(see <http://www.kairosbritain.org.uk/category/taking-action/kairos-communities-taking-action/> for more details).