

## UNITED METHODISTS ANSWERING PALESTINIAN CHRISTIANS' CALL TO ACTION

Greetings to all our global members and supporters!

In the six months since we began convening the new Steering Committee of UMKR, much has happened. We have a new organizational structure (below) with new and growing committees. We are also establishing an Advisory Council and a Bishops' Council with outstanding leaders who are expanding the church's call for justice in the Holy Land. At all times we strive to keep the Holy Spirit at the center of our work.

We encourage you to learn about our major areas of activity and to envision yourself in one of them. On our website is a small [brochure](#) that describes these areas. Periodically we'll provide updates on activity in these committees and offer ways you can make a difference!

Yours in Christ,

Michael Yoshii and Susanne Hoder

UMKR Co-chairs

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### UMKR Organizational Structure



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## In 2015, eight annual conferences call for divestment

*Four UMKR resolutions are going to General Conference 2016*



United Methodists show support for UMC divestment at the 2012 General Conference in Tampa, Florida.

During the 2015 United Methodist annual conference sessions, [eight conferences](#) representing hundreds of thousands of church members have called for UM divestment from companies with ties to illegal settlements on occupied land.

These actions answer the call by thousands of Palestinian Christians in [Kairos Palestine: A Moment of Truth](#) for ethical, nonviolent action such as divestment and boycott to help end the Israeli occupation. The 2015 conference actions follow 19 divestment resolutions adopted by UMC annual conferences in previous years and similar calls from [dozens](#) of Christian and Jewish groups worldwide.

In advance of the upcoming UMC General Conference 2016, UMKR prepared four [divestment resolutions](#). All four resolutions have been adopted by bodies of the church and will be considered at General Conference 2016. UMKR's multi-faceted approach provides concrete answers to issues that were raised at the 2012 General Conference in Tampa, FL. Two of the resolutions call for investment screens of companies that profit from illegal settlement activity in any occupation, not only Israel's occupation of Palestinian land. Another calls for divestment from Caterpillar for practices that are clearly within its control: refusal to adopt the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and sales of militarized bulldozers that are used as weapons by Israel. The fourth resolution specifies CAT, HP and Motorola Solutions because, after years of church engagement, these companies are unwilling to end their involvement in the occupation. Find more details in our [press release](#). To learn more about UMKR's divestment work, contact Divestment Chair Lisa Bender at [lbender@susumc.org](mailto:lbender@susumc.org),

UMKR congratulates the hard-working volunteers who shepherded these bills through their conferences and celebrates the growing awareness of the Palestinian plight throughout our church.

## Boycott campaign takes off

*Research into settlement products yields surprising results*

In 2012, The United Methodist Church [called](#) for all nations to ban the import of products from Israeli settlements on Palestinian land. Acting on that mandate to boycott the settlements, UMKR has been researching exactly what those products are. See our findings and our research methods in the publication on our website: [Seizing the Mandate](#).



You may be surprised that many U.S. companies use settlement products in their manufacturing, from auto supplies to parts for lawnmowers. We were stunned to learn that Williams Sonoma imported over 746,000 pounds of bed linens from an illegal settlement *(continued on p.3)*

## Boycott campaign takes off

*(continued from p.2)*

in just one year, and that Toys R Us uses settlement products in its Imaginarium Discovery Line.

Our [boycott resources](#) are worth a check to see if your favorite store or company buys products from the settlements. Managers may not be aware of this, and you can help bring it to their attention.

In 2015, our Boycott Committee published new boycott resources, including:

- Introductory PowerPoint for congregations,
- Shopping guide / bulletin insert with six product lines to boycott,
- Colorful four-page piece called “Why Boycott the Settlements,”
- Updated Q and A about the boycott
- Analysis of the scriptural, theological and practical reasons for boycott.

These resources and more can be downloaded at [www.kairosresponse.org/Boycott](http://www.kairosresponse.org/Boycott). Many UMC annual conferences used these resources at their 2015 sessions. For more information on boycott resources, please contact our Boycott Committee Chair, Alan Kinney, at [akinney3@twcny.rr.com](mailto:akinney3@twcny.rr.com).

## UMKR alliances

*Building the movement with the help of our friends*

UMKR could not succeed in its work for justice without the support and ideas of its partners within and beyond the church. In 2012, we were blessed to have the support of a long list of allies.



This year we are trying to become more aware of issues that are important to these allies and support them as well. We are honored to be among so many groups working for a better world.

We would especially like to thank the General Board of Church and Society ([GBCS](#)) for endorsing our 2016 resolutions, Methodist Federation for Social Action ([MFSA](#)) for its invaluable help in getting these resolutions out to annual conferences, and our friends at Jewish Voice for Peace ([JVP](#)) who have supported our work since the beginning. Please keep all these groups in your prayers. For more information, contact our Alliances Chair, Julienne Landsdown: [jmlandsdown@yahoo.com](mailto:jmlandsdown@yahoo.com).

## Historic UCC action for divestment and boycott

*Landslide vote sends strong message of support for justice in the Holy Land*

UMKR heartily congratulates our United Church of Christ friends on the successful vote for divestment and boycott at their General Synod on June 30th.



**UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST**

“In approving this resolution, the UCC has demonstrated its commitment to justice and equality,” said Rev. Mitri Raheb, a Christian

Palestinian and Pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land. “This action sends a strong message that there are still churches that dare to speak truth to power.”

The vote, which was 508 in favor, 124 against, with 38 abstentions, was the culmination of a process that began in 2005. Read more in the [press release](#) from the **UCC Palestine Israel Network**. Read the [NY Times article](#).

# Holy Land travel opportunities

*Many upcoming tours that offer life-changing experiences*

On our website, UMKR [recommends](#) organizers whose tours will follow the guidelines in our church's [resolution](#) "Holy Land Travel." These trips offer opportunities not only to visit the important biblical sites, but also to meet and learn from the "living stones," the people of the land. UMKR also urges United Methodists to contact the [Methodist Liaison Office](#) in Jerusalem when planning a trip to the Holy Land. Following are some great travel opportunities in 2015-16:

## United Methodist Trips

### Holy Land Study Tour: A Pilgrimage of

**Discovery:** February 8-19, 2016

Contact Janet Lahr Lewis (*photo above*), former Methodist Liaison in Palestine and Israel: [jlahrlewis@gmail.com](mailto:jlahrlewis@gmail.com).

### Volunteers in Mission Trips, hosted by the Methodist Liaison Office in Palestine & Israel

• **The Holy Land & Jordan:** Oct. 26–Nov. 9, 2015

Contact Rev. Larry Norman: [lduckn@aol.com](mailto:lduckn@aol.com).

• **The Holy Land:** February 15–27, 2016

Contact Lorna Jost, UMVIM Coordinator, North Central Jurisdiction: [umvim-ncj@brookings.net](mailto:umvim-ncj@brookings.net).

## Pilgrims of Ibillin Tour

**Living Stones Pilgrimage:** October 16–29, 2015

Contact Rev. Joan Deming (UMC clergy): 608-241-9281 or [jdeming7@gmail.com](mailto:jdeming7@gmail.com).

## Interfaith Peace Builders Delegations

• **Summer delegation:** July 25–August 7, 2015

• **Olive harvest delegation:** Nov. 2–15, 2015

For more information and the 2016 schedule, go to [interfaithpeacebuilders.org/delegations](http://interfaithpeacebuilders.org/delegations).

Friends of Sabeel North America ([FOSNA](#)), Society for Biblical Exploration ([SBE](#)), and Society for Biblical Studies ([SBS](#)) also offer excellent tours. For more information about responsible Holy Land tourism, see [www.kairosresponse.org/Tours](http://www.kairosresponse.org/Tours) and contact our Holy Land Tourism Chair, Larry George, at: [lgeorgepomo@comcast.net](mailto:lgeorgepomo@comcast.net).



## Two actions in Congress

*Opposing settlements; advocating for children*

UMKR's U.S. Policy Committee has been closely following and supporting two important actions in Congress this summer.

The first pertains to **language inserted in the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP)** that UMKR and many of our advocacy partners strongly opposed. It makes future US-EU trade deals dependent on the European Union reversing measures already taken regarding illegal Israeli settlements. This language in the TPP aims to protect Israel's settlements from accountability measures, despite the fact that the EU and the UN consider Israeli settlements to be illegal under international law.

However, after the bill's adoption, the U.S. State Department issued a strong and welcome statement that they [would not apply](#) that language in the bill to protect the settlements: "The U.S. government has never defended or supported Israeli settlements...and, by extension, does not pursue policies or activities that would legitimize them." *(continued on p.5)*



## Two actions in Congress

(continued from p.4)

UMKR also has participated in a recent initiative on behalf of Palestinian children. A 2013 [United Nations report](#) documents the 7,000 Palestinian children ages 12-17 who have been arrested in the past decade and subjected to “cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment and punishment.”



The **No Way to Treat a Child (NWTC)** Campaign, with support from UMKR and many partners, organized a Congressional briefing on June 2: “International Juvenile Justice Reform: Children in Israeli Military Detention.” Speakers included Brad Parker of Defence for Children International-Palestine, Rabbi Brant Rosen and Jennifer Bing of AFSC, and Joe Stork of Human Rights Watch. Organizers report that the successful briefing was packed with legislators and their staffers. Learn more about the campaign: [nowaytotreatachild.org](http://nowaytotreatachild.org).

Following up on this briefing, [a letter](#) to Secretary of State John Kerry from Rep. Betty McCollum (D-MN) and 18 other members of Congress urged the State Department to make the human rights of Palestinian children a priority in its dealings with Israel. Among the signers were Congressional Progressive Caucus co-chairs, and members of the Armed Services, Intelligence, Appropriations, and Ways and Means Committees. UMKR and many partners strongly advocated for this encouraging step by members of Congress. *Find out if your legislators signed and thank them or ask why not: [Click here to take action with NWTC](#) »*



## WWPPI 2015, Sept. 20 – 26

**“God has broken down the dividing walls”**

Every year, Christians around the world take time during **World Week for Peace in Palestine Israel (WWPPI)** to teach and learn what is happening in Israel/Palestine and how we can become peacemakers for the Holy Land. Learn more about WWPPI from [GBCS](#). *Start planning now at least one WWPPI activity, large or small, for your church this September with [excellent 2015 resources](#) from the World Council of Churches. Find more great resources in the [2014 booklet](#).*

**This year, UMKR has speakers available to come to your area; contact UMKR co-chair Michael Yoshii at: [michaelyoshii1@gmail.com](mailto:michaelyoshii1@gmail.com).**

## Plan a film screening

JustVision is offering a unique way, through the online app Gathr, to plan a screening of the recently released ***The Wanted 18***. This much-talked-about film recreates an astonishing true story: the Israeli army’s pursuit of eighteen cows, whose milk production on a Palestinian farm was declared “a threat to the national security of the state of Israel.” [Watch the trailer](#) and request a [screening](#) in your area.



See other great films at JustVision’s website: ***Budrus, My Neighbourhood, Home Front*** and ***Encounter Point***. [JustVision](#) films highlight the power of Palestinians and Israelis working to end the Israeli occupation using nonviolent means.

## Destruction in Wadi Foquin



Agricultural land in West Bank village Wadi Foquin, after Israeli forces destroyed 1,300 trees. Photo source: al-bushra.org

At around 5:30 on Thursday morning, June 11, a group of Israeli Defense Force (IDF) soldiers entered Wadi Foquin accompanied by around 20 Israeli laborers and three pieces of earthmoving equipment. The machines then proceeded to destroy around nine acres (34 dunams) of fruit trees,

most of which belonged to a Palestinian farmer well known to United Methodists.

When people from the village came out to protest, they were met with tear gas and percussion bombs. When the farmer screamed for the soldiers to stop and tried to protect his trees, he was beaten and thrown to the ground by the soldiers...[Read more »](#)

The United Methodist Church supports a Community Development Project in the Palestinian village of Wadi Foquin. It is also a UM Advance Project supported by fund donations and volunteers, many of whom have visited the village. Take action to support the [Wadi Foquin project](#).

A United Methodist group in the California-Nevada conference, [Friends of Wadi Foquin](#), will be recommending further action to help the village. Look for an update from UMKR in coming weeks.

## It's time – again – for BDS to end oppression

by Rev. Lloyd Nyarota

April 26, 2015 – For many Africans, a sense of déjà vu was unavoidable last month as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu proclaimed, “Whoever moves to establish a Palestinian state or intends to withdraw from territory is simply yielding territory for radical Islamic terrorist attacks against Israel.” Asked by the Israeli news site NRG if that meant a state would not be established if he remained prime minister, he said: “Indeed”....I was reminded of another prime minister, one whose words still echo in the hearts and minds of my fellow Zimbabweans. “There will be no majority rule in my lifetime,” said Ian Smith in 1969. [Read the article »](#)



*Lloyd Nyarota is UMC clergy, a UMKR member, and a citizen of Zimbabwe who served as GBCS staff in Africa for several years and as Director of the Chabadza Community Development Programme in Zimbabwe.*

## Missionaries in Palestine retire after 30+ years

UMKR sends warm wishes to Rev. and Mrs. Alex and Brenda Awad, who have served in Palestine for decades, including over 20 years as GBGM missionaries.



Alex Awad was the pastor of East Jerusalem Baptist Church, served as Professor, Dean of Students and Director of the Shepherd Society at Bethlehem Bible College, organized three [Christ at the Checkpoint](#) conferences and is the author of two books. Brenda Awad served at the college in administration; she also worked as an English teacher, Sunday School Director, and women's group leader and helped to facilitate visits by UMC groups. Learn more about the decades of service of [Alex](#) and [Brenda](#) Awad.