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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

United Methodist regional bodies oppose "anti-BDS" legislation

Church's Western Jurisdiction, representing over 1,500 congregations and over 300,000 members, calls for protection of Americans' freedom to engage in protected political speech.

September 3, 2016 – United Methodists for Kairos Response (UMKR) congratulates both the [Western Jurisdiction](#) and the [California-Nevada Conference](#) of the United Methodist Church for the strong positions they have adopted earlier this summer at their legislative sessions, calling for all elected officials to uphold Americans' right to engage in peaceful and principled actions – such as boycotts, divestment and sanctions – to address injustice and oppression.

UMKR also applauds a Christian ecumenical coalition that includes the United Methodist Church's General Board of Church and Society, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the United Church of Christ, the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, Pax Christi and other prominent Protestant and Roman Catholic agencies and organizations for [their statement issued last week](#) in which they denounce recent attempts by state governments to curtail basic freedoms: "... It strikes us as an attempt to remove a responsible, powerful, and legal method of public witness as an option. To target economic measures in any way on one specific policy issue—Israel-Palestine—is selective and inconsistent."

Diverse organizations and leaders across the political spectrum, including the Anti-Defamation League, the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, Americans for Peace Now, the ACLU, the National Lawyers Guild, the Center for Constitutional Rights, Jewish Voice for Peace, and [United Methodists for Kairos Response](#), have issued warnings about or stated their opposition to a disturbing trend sweeping through U.S. states and in Congress: bills and blacklists – often called "anti-BDS" measures – that condemn and attempt to stifle, stigmatize or penalize economic advocacy that is focused on ending the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and achieving a just peace for all the people of Israel/Palestine.

The U.S. Supreme Court [has clearly established](#) that these time-honored methods of justice advocacy constitute protected political speech in the United States.

Regarding the resolution adopted by the California-Nevada Conference in June, Patricia Daugherty of their Israel/Palestine Task Force said: "We were impressed by the widespread support for this issue. Even people who aren't sure what they think about BDS agreed we have to protect our right to take part in these actions."

Rev. Sandra Olewine, a former missionary to the Holy Land and an elected delegate to the Western Jurisdictional Conference in Scottsdale, AZ in July, stated that the conference's

unanimous vote by a diverse group of delegates was highly significant, and "made it clear how strongly United Methodists of all political persuasions feel about preserving our freedoms, including the right to boycott."

United Methodists for Kairos Response is an independent, international, grassroots movement of laity and clergy in the United Methodist Church. UMKR seeks to answer the urgent call of Palestinian Christians for effective action to help end the Israeli occupation and achieve equality, freedom and dignity for all the people of the Holy Land. Find more information at:
<http://www.kairosresponse.org>

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Dec. 2016 – Please note that this press release has been updated with UMKR's new name: United Methodists for Kairos Response.