

February 2016

Dear Deacons,

At the last meeting of the Deacons I promised to send you some reading materials concerning the UCC, the wider church and the BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) movement. Here are a number of documents and links (see "The Church and BDS") for your information.

The basis for much of the national setting of the UCC's activity in this area has been a paper titled the Kairos Document, which I have included. This report, like most everything published relating to the situation in the Holy Land, reflects a partisan position. And so, as you will see, the Kairos document is very sympathetic to BDS while the NGO Monitor report, which I have also forwarded, offers a sharp critique.

Personally and pastorally, I believe that the advocacy of differing perspectives should be unobjectionable in any setting of people, religious or secular, that values free discussion and robust debate. That said, as late Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan once observed, while everyone is entitled to their own opinions, they are not entitled to their own facts. Unfortunately, the Kairos document offers a number of 'facts' that are simply not true. This has implications for not only Israelis and Palestinians but for the Christian community. Ultimately, I believe, the wider church's integrity, and its ability to offer a credible witness as an interfaith partner, is at stake. One can faithfully offer legitimate critiques of Israeli government policy, just as one can of any political institution. To engage in, or even unintentionally support activity that is, or has the potential to be understood as, anti-Semitic is another matter.

This is an emotionally charged, highly complicated topic. My hope is that we are able to continue to explore this matter faithfully with one another.

With gratitude for your faithfulness and for all you do as deacons,

Yours faithfully,

Steve