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**MEMORIAL TO
THE LOWER SUSQUEHANNA SYNOD
REGARDING
FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CHURCHWIDE STRATEGY FOR
ENGAGEMENT IN ISRAEL AND PALESTINE
FROM
THE ECUMENICAL AND INTER-RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

11 **WHEREAS**, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has committed itself to peacemaking through the
12 “Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine” adopted at the 2005 Churchwide Assembly,
13 which assumes that ELCA action will among other things (§II.A.)

- 14 • *Provide clear and reliable information to ELCA members,*
- 15 • *Be balanced in terms of its care for all parties in the conflict,*
- 16 • *Be shaped by a commitment to listen and learn from companions and from both those with whom*
17 *participants agree and those with whom they disagree,*
- 18 • *Take responsibility for careful consideration of the political and humanitarian implications of our*
19 *theology, and*
- 20 • *Reflect...zero tolerance for anti-Jewish and/or anti-Muslim sentiments or actions; and*

21
22 **WHEREAS**, the Strategy seeks among its outcomes (§II.B)

- 23 • *A better understanding among ELCA leaders and members, along with their legislators, about the*
24 *situation in Israel and Palestine,*
- 25 • *A deepening of mutual understanding between Jews and Lutherans and Muslims and Lutherans*
26 *through dialogue and shared action,*
- 27 • *The enrichment of ELCA strategy for engagement in the Holy Land through these relationships, and*
28 • *Increased cooperation and collaboration between the ELCA and Jewish groups in the U.S. – and*
29 *with groups within Israel- that seek peace with justice in Israel and Palestine; and*

30
31 **WHEREAS**, the church’s calling to cultivate a culture of peace involves a process of informed moral
32 deliberation that seeks “the powerful vision of difference in unity..., call[ing] us to engage differences, not to
33 ignore or fear them...[and] to strengthen [our] own particular communities in ways that promote respect and
34 appreciation for people in other communities: (ELCA Social Statement on Peace, §5A); and

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36 **WHEREAS**, the war of words in the Arab-Israel-Palestinian conflict includes both intentional and negligent
37 misrepresentations of the history of the region and of Arab, Israeli and Palestinian actions and policies; and

38
39 **WHEREAS**, our moral deliberation must take adequate account of a region with a long, complex history, for
40 which different parties have widely disparate narratives and interpretations, and with multiple conflicts
41 including those between the Israelis and Palestinians, between different Palestinian factions, and between
42 nations in the region; and

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44 **WHEREAS**, the quest for peace between Palestinians and Israelis has recently been complicated by the
45 increasing regional influence of Iran, which has avowed a strategic goal of annihilating Israel and has supported
46 militias with the same intent; and

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48 **WHEREAS**, the ELCA has been and remains committed to accompanying our Palestinian Lutheran brothers
49 and sisters in their suffering and in their striving for Palestinian political autonomy and recognition in a viable,
50 contiguous state; and

51
52 **WHEREAS**, the ELCA in its 1994 Declaration to the Jewish People expressed the “urgent desire to live out our

53 faith in Jesus Christ with love and respect for the Jewish people, “ whose corporate identity and self-expression
54 is intimately tied to the State of Israel; therefore be it
55

56 **RESOLVED**, that the Lower Susquehanna Synod memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly of the
57 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to reaffirm this church’s commitment to peace-making in the Arab-
58 Israeli-Palestinian conflict through implementation of its Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and
59 Palestine to the fullest extent possible, and in so doing to:

- 60 1. Re-affirm our renunciation of violence; and
- 61 2. Embody a multilateral solidarity with the Israeli and Palestinian peoples, as the primary communities
62 involved, and with all those with whom we find common cause for peace, justice and dignity; and
- 63 3. Acknowledge the State of Israel as a legitimate political self-expression of the Jewish people, as well as
64 the urgency of national sovereignty as a political self-expression of the Palestinian people; and
- 65 4. Educate and equip members, congregations, synods, personnel and affiliated agencies of the ELCA for
66 advocacy on behalf of all parties to the conflict who seek peace; and
- 67 5. Resist preferential identification with any party in the conflict to the extent that it may inhibit our roles as
68 witnesses for peace and facilitators of reconciliation, even as we continue our unique relationship with
69 and accompaniment of Palestinian Christians and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the
70 Holy Land (ELCJHL); and
- 71 6. Renounce the use of language and materials that caricature or over-simplify the conflict, dehumanize
72 Arabs, Israelis, or Palestinians or challenge the political legitimacy of their respective national
73 movements, and counsel our strategy partners against such use; and
- 74 7. Encourage and empower ELCA members, congregations, synods, personnel and affiliated agencies to
75 become more familiar with and engaged with both Israeli and Palestinian schools, humanitarian
76 organizations and co-existence projects; and
- 77 8. Position our witness more strongly to challenge any injustice in the region.

78 Adopted by the Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Affairs Committee
79 The Rev. Dr. Darlis J. Swan, Chair

80 **RECOMMENDATION ON MEMORIAL 6:**

81 **The Committee on Memorials presents MEMORIAL 6 to the Synod Assembly without recommendation.**

82 John B. Ferra, Jr., chair
83 Thomas McKee, scribe
84 June 3, 2009

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