

Expanding Baltimore-Washington's Socially Responsible Investment Screens

Budget Implications: none to the 2017 conference budget, but conference investments will be realigned if this resolution is approved

Rationale: The conference Divestment Working Group's report in 2015 urged the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference to better promote the use of socially responsible investment screens. This resolution seeks to strengthen our commitment to human rights by expanding those screens to exclude companies that violate human rights in the occupation of Palestine for the Mid-Atlantic Foundation and the conference Board of Pensions.

Submitted by: Rev. Shannon Sullivan, Presbury United Methodist Church, Edgewood, MD
and the Baltimore-Washington Chapter of Methodist Federation for Social Action

Resolution:

Palestinian Christians have implored Christians everywhere to put actions behind their words and end Israel's occupation of Palestinian land. Palestinian human rights are violated by companies that sustain illegal settlements, segregated roads, checkpoints, the separation wall, home demolitions, and other realities of the occupation. In December 2016, the United Nations passed U.N. Security Council Resolution 2334, which condemns Israeli settlement expansion in Palestinian territories. The Wespath Equity Social Values Plus Fund has removed Caterpillar, Motorola Solutions, and Hewlett Packard because the fund uses stronger human rights screens (http://www.wespath.org/assets/1/7/investment_policy.pdf). Yet, the Baltimore-Washington Conference continues to hold stock in these companies.

The Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church established a Divestment Working Group that reported to the Annual Conference in 2015 with recommendations concerning the promotion of socially responsible investing (SRI) in local congregations and at the conference level. Yet, their recommendations did not include any comments about specific investments in companies that profit from Israel's occupation of Palestine.

The Book of Discipline directs us to consider excluding companies from our investments if they fail to act responsibly (§ 717, The Book of Discipline). The United Methodist General Conference asks all companies that profit from and/or support settlements through their business activities to examine these activities and stop any business transactions that contribute to violations of international law, promote systemic discrimination or otherwise support ongoing military occupation (2016 United Methodist Book of Resolutions #6111, p. 605). Institutions including Wespath and individual annual conferences have engaged Caterpillar, Motorola Solutions, and Hewlett Packard on their involvement in Israel's occupation of Palestine for a decade (https://www.kairosresponse.org/corporate_engagement_04-11.html), but have seen little change.

In the past, one of the concerns the Mid-Atlantic Foundation shared (on the floor of annual conference and also to the working group on divestment) was that the Baltimore-Washington Conference's investments cannot easily be separated out from Eastern Pennsylvania's or Peninsula Delaware's. This resolution asks that the Mid-Atlantic Foundation make the prophetic decision to divest the funds from all three annual conferences.

Divestment, as a non-violent moral action, seeks to strengthen the Church's support of securing peace for the peoples of Israel and Palestine. The church should lead with prophetic action by publicly and promptly aligning its investments with long-standing church policies opposing the Israeli occupation.

BE IT RESOLVED that the Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church requests the Mid-Atlantic Foundation to end our financial involvement in Israel's occupation by divesting from Caterpillar, Motorola Solutions, and Hewlett Packard, which are companies that sustain the occupation. with whom we have repeatedly engaged with on this issue.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Baltimore-Washington Conference encourages the socially-responsible investment (SRI) screens used by the Baltimore-Washington Conference Board of Pensions and the Mid-Atlantic Foundation to use stronger human rights screens, as the Wespath Equity Social Values Plus Fund does.

61 **Effective Date:**

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63 **Co-Sponsors:** Dumbarton United Methodist Church

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65 *On March 4, the Connectional Table of the Baltimore-Washington Conference voted non-concurrence with*
66 *this resolution.*

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