

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON
PEACEMAKING

12

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)
216TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY (2004)

[The full text of the items referred to this committee may be found in the Reports to the General Assembly under tab 12.]

Moderator: Bruce Gillette
Vice Moderator: Gail O'Dell

There are recommendations contained in this report that will be moved as part of a consent agenda. Such items are marked with an asterisk (“*”) and are so indicated in the Table of Contents below.

There are recommendations contained in this report that have financial implications and are indicated with a “\$” sign next to the item. The details of the financial implication are provided with the item in the context of the report, and are so indicated in the Table of Contents below.

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The Assembly Committee on Peacemaking recommends that the 216th General Assembly (2004) approve the following recommendations:

Overtures

Item 12-01. On Supporting the Geneva Accord, Urging Israel and Palestine to Implement the Accord—From the Presbytery of St. Augustine. +ACSWP, ACREC

In response to Item 12-01, the 216th General Assembly (2004) approves the following:

At the time the Presbytery of St. Augustine approved Item 12-01, support for the “Geneva Accord” urging Israel and the Palestinians to implement the Accord seemed a practicable way forward in light of the derailed “road map,” especially in light of action taken by the 215th General Assembly (2003) strongly urging Israeli and Palestinian leaders “to be serious, active, and diligent about seeking peace for their peoples; or, if they are unwilling or unable, to step down and make room for other leaders who will and can” (*Resolution on Israel and Palestine: End the Occupation Now*, Recommendation D, *Minutes*, 2003, Part I, p. 636.).

June 30, 2004, 10:20 PM

At this time, however, several months since the approval of the proposed item by said presbytery, the situation and the prospects for a negotiated just peace have so deteriorated that people in the region generally, and particularly the Palestinians, have been driven to the edge of despair and hopelessness. Therefore, the 216th General Assembly (2004) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) does the following:

1. Confesses the sovereignty of God over all nations, states, governments, and peoples, acknowledging God's supreme act of love for the whole world manifest in Jesus Christ so that by faith the world might not perish but be saved. In Christ, God has called us to show love, seek peace, and to pursue justice, so that the world might be transformed into a foretaste of God's peaceable kingdom.

2. Continues to be inspired by the tenacity of hope of our Palestinian Christian partners in the face of ominous, cumulative gloom and foreboding; it affirms that God has not given us a spirit of timidity, nor have we been called to surrender hope to an attitude of despair.

3. Commends the Presbytery of St. Augustine on its concern for a just resolution of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, and for moving the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to persist in voicing this concern. The assembly, therefore, welcomes the possibilities for peace contained in the "Geneva Accord," as a useful and practical approach. It would also be encouraged by other inspired initiatives that could advance the prospects of peace in the Middle East.

4. Reiterates and reaffirms the call of last year's General Assembly on the Israeli government to "end the occupation now," asserting that:

a. The occupation must end; it has proven to be at the root of evil acts committed against innocent people on both sides of the conflict.

b. The security of Israel and the Israeli people is inexorably dependent on making peace with their Palestinian neighbors, by negotiating and reaching a just and equitable solution to the conflict that respects international law, human rights, the sanctity of life, and dignity of persons, land, property, safety of home, freedom of movement, the rights of refugees to return to their homeland, the right of a people to determine their political future, and to live in peace and prosperity.

c. Horrific acts of violence and deadly attacks on innocent people, whether carried out by Palestinian "suicide bombers" or by the Israeli military, are abhorrent and inexcusable by all measures, and are a dead-end alternative to a negotiated settlement of the conflict.

d. The United States needs, now more than ever, to become an honest, even-handed broker for peace, and should review its approach to the problem, allowing more room for the more meaningful participation of other members of the U.N.-designated "Quartet" (the United States, Russia, Germany and France) and others;

e. The international community has an obligation to provide physical protection for those isolated by fear and/or by physical and psychological barriers, thus making space

for the restoration of security and creating a climate for the resumption of negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians. We support the Palestinians' persistent request to the United Nations to send a peacekeeping force.

5. Vigorously urges the U.S. government, the government of Israel, and the Palestinian leadership to move swiftly, and with resolve, to recognize that the only way out of this chronic and vicious impasse is to abandon all approaches that exacerbate further strife, lay aside arrogant political posturing, and get on with forging negotiated compromises that open a path to peace.

6. Endorses the letter sent on April 19, 2004, by the Stated Clerk, reiterating concerns of our denomination for Christian partners and their institutions that serve as agents of reconciliation and hope, as well as for their Palestinian and Israeli neighbors, in the Holy Land, in the framework of previous statements of the General Assembly.

7. Refers to Mission Responsibility Through Investment Committee (MRTI) with instructions to initiate a process of phased selective divestment in multinational corporations operating in Israel, in accordance to General Assembly policy on social investing, and to make appropriate recommendations to the General Assembly Council for action.

Vote: 68/0/0

Item 12-02. On Calling for an End to the Construction of a Wall by the State of Israel—From the Presbytery of Chicago. +GAC +ACSWP, ACREC

That the recommendation be approved with amendment and with comment: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through and with brackets; text to be added or inserted is shown with an underline and with brackets.]

~~“[The Presbytery of Chicago respectfully overtures]~~ [Recognizing that God’s love as evidenced in Jesus Christ is for all God’s children, and recognizing the human rights of all people to God’s resources including land and water and livelihood,] the 216th General Assembly (2004) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) ~~[to]~~ [requests] ~~[that]~~ the Stated Clerk make known to the president of the United States, the members of Congress of the United States, [and] the State of Israel, [and the Palestinian National Authority] its opposition to the construction of a wall and other barriers by the State of Israel and further to make known the desire of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) that the United States of America make no monetary contribution to the 1.3 billion dollar cost of the construction of this wall, construction of which has already begun and will continue for several years.”

Comment: The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has approved numerous resolutions on Israel and Palestine, repeatedly affirming, clearly and unequivocally, Israel’s right to exist within permanent, recognized, and “secure” borders (for example: 1969, 1974, 1977, 1983, 1989, etc.). It has deplored the cycle of escalating violence—carried out by both Palestinians and Israelis—which is rooted in Israel’s continued occupation of Palestinian territories (cf. statements of successive assemblies since 1967). Presbyterians have continued to be concerned about the loss of so many innocent lives of

Israelis and Palestinians (see “Resolution on the Middle East,” approved in 1997, and “Resolution on Israel and Palestine: End the Occupation Now,” approved in 2003).

Because of its deep concern for peace in the area, and how the “Separation Barrier,” generally referred to as the “Security Wall,” is impacting the lives of people on both sides, the GAC expresses grave alarm at the construction of this barrier. Further, given the long-standing, deeply rooted spiritual and programmatic bonds existing between the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and its partner churches in the Holy Land, it is particularly concerned that the life and ministry of the dwindling remnant of the Christian community will be severely impeded. As it voices these concerns within the framework of many General Assembly statements over more than thirty-five years, the GAC wants to help Presbyterians to understand some of the aspects of the wall’s impact. These may be summarized as follows:

- The “Separation Barrier,” currently under construction, consists of a twenty-five-foot high concrete wall meandering through mostly Palestinian lands, plus stretches of electrified barbed-wire fence extensions of the wall.
- Israel claims it is building the wall between Israel and the West Bank, but only 10 percent will be on the Green Line (i.e., Israel’s 1967 border).
- Ninety percent of the rest stretches into the West Bank, isolates significant amounts of land, and affects the lives of many thousands of Palestinians. This year approximately 210,000 people will be economically and socially cut off from their neighborhoods, their families, their farmlands, their employment, their educational and health-care facilities, and their places of worship.
- A wall built along the Green Line would be half the length of the current wall and much easier to patrol.

Many believe that the route of the wall has been determined not by security, but by the political goals of maintaining the settlements and impacting future peace talks. Palestinian church partners have expressed the view that they might not object to the construction of a wall if it were built on Israeli land. The current wall ghettoizes the Palestinians and forces them onto what can only be called reservations.

The General Assembly Council is engaged in various ministries that support the Christian churches and ecumenical bodies in their own work of evangelism, outreach and church growth, health ministries, education, economic and social development, peacemaking, interfaith dialogue, reconciliation, and cooperation.

Especially following a recent visit by an official PC(USA) delegation to Israel and Palestine (in February 2004), the GAC believes that the best hope for security for both Israelis and Palestinians may be found in laying down all forms of aggression on both sides, ending the Israeli occupation, and finding ways to build bridges of peace rather than walls of separation. Good neighborly relations, rather than mutual isolation and suspicion, are urgently needed between Israel and its neighbors in Palestine and the Middle East.

Vote: 65/3/0

*Item 12-03. On Confronting Christian Zionism—From the Presbytery of Chicago. +GAC
+ACSWP, ACREC

That the recommendations be approved with amendment and with comment.

Amend Item 12-03 as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through and with brackets; text to be added or inserted is shown with an underline and with brackets.]

“The Presbytery of Chicago respectfully overtures the 216th General Assembly (2004) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to actively oppose Christian Zionism and to develop a plan to communicate the theological and political ramifications it engenders within our denomination, in the mass media, and among U. S. government officials. Specifically, we call upon the General Assembly to do the following:

“1. [Call upon the Stated Clerk to] [H][i]ssue to all churches in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) a pastoral letter on Christian Zionism and the ongoing conflict in Israel and Palestine by making this letter available on the PC(USA) Web site. [The assembly requests the following offices to assist the Stated Clerk in the preparation of this letter: the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy, Corporate Witness, Interfaith Relations, Middle East, and the Office of Theology and Worship.]

“2. Direct the Stated Clerk to inform current government officials [~~of the Christian alternatives to Christian Zionism~~] [that Christian Zionism does not represent the majority of American Christians and the faith of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)].

“3. Direct the General Assembly Council to continue to commend and promote the PC(USA) list of resources found in the September/October 2003 issue of *Church & Society*, entitled “Israel and Palestine: The Quest for Peace,” so that Presbyterians can and will become knowledgeable of the present day Middle East situation and have a better understanding of its history and people.

“4. Direct the Office of the General Assembly and the General Assembly Council to educate Presbyterians about the Reformed principles for interpreting Scripture [~~in light of the gospel and the rule of love of God and neighbor,~~] as affirmed by previous General Assemblies. [Specifically, interpreting Scripture as follows:

“[a. In light of the entire witness of Scripture: ‘Thus the New Testament’s emphasis on the gospel is not to be understood apart from the Old Testament’s emphasis on the grace of the law; and the Old Testament’s emphasis on the law is not to be understood apart from the New Testament’s emphasis on the grace of the gospel,’ *Presbyterian Understanding and Use of Holy Scripture (Minutes, PCUS, 1983, Part I, p. 615).*

“[b. And the rule of love of God and neighbor: ‘The fundamental expression of God’s will is the two-fold commandment to love God and neighbor, and all interpretations are to be judged by the question whether they offer and support the love given and commanded by God,’ *Presbyterian Understanding and Use of Holy Scripture (Minutes, PCUS, 1983, Part I, p. 615).*

~~“[5. Continue to cooperate with other denominations and like-minded groups to promote an understanding of peace in the Holy Land.] [Direct the General Assembly Council (GAC), through its offices on the Middle East, Interfaith Relations, Theology and Worship, and the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, to develop a brief resource and study guide to assist Presbyterians in understanding how biblical faith and Reformed theology guide our understanding of present realities and possibilities in the Middle East. This resource/study guide is to be mailed to all churches and posted on the PC(USA) Web site.]~~

“6. Continue to cooperate with other [denominations] church bodies and like-minded groups to promote [an understanding of] peace in the Holy Land.

~~“[6.] [7.] Urge our Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)-related colleges and seminaries to address this issue.~~

“[8. Commend to the church the following works to better understand dispensationalism and Christian Zionism:

“[a. Our own resources from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.):

“[• *Between Millennia: What Presbyterians Believe About the Coming of Christ* (PDS 70-420-01-007)—commended by the 213th General Assembly (2001) to the church.

“[• ‘Eschatology: The Doctrine of Last Things,’ *Minutes of the General Assembly, Journal* (Presbyterian Church in the United States, 1978).

“[• ‘Dispensationalism,’ *Minutes of the General Assembly* (Presbyterian Church in the United States, 1944), pp. 123–27.

“[• GAC CMD Comment 12-03 from the GAC that lays out the theological context of Dispensationalism and Christian Zionism.

“[b. Resources from outside the PCUSA:

“[• Wes Granberg-Michaelson, “Christian Zionism distorts faith and imperils peace,” <http://www.warc.ch/update/up134/01.html>].

“[• Don Wagner, *Peace or Armageddon?: The Unfolding Drama of the Middle East Accord* (HarperCollins, 2004).

“[• Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism : Road Map to Armageddon?* (InterVarsity Press, 2004) [forthcoming].

“[• ‘Christian Zionists in Their Own Words and Articles on Christian Zionism.’ Sabeel Center.

“[• Gary Burge, *Whose Land? Whose Promise?: What Christians Are Not Being Told About Israel and the Palestinians* (Pilgrim Press, 2003).

“[9. Pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit to illumine our minds as we continue to seek a deeper understanding of God’s Word for us and for the world today.]”

Comment: Item 12-03 calls on the General Assembly to oppose Christian Zionism and to develop a plan to communicate the theological and political ramifications it engenders to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), in the mass media, and among U.S. government officials.

Item 12-03 rightly calls on the General Assembly to look closely at the role that Christian theology has in relation to current struggles in Middle-East politics and to work for peace in that troubled region.

Presbyterians have a strong history of careful theological and social analysis, and the question of Christian Zionism and its relation to U.S. policies toward the Middle East deserves that type of consideration.

1. What Is Christian Zionism?

Christian Zionism “weds religion with politics and interprets biblical faithfulness in terms of fidelity to Israel’s future” [<http://www.hcef.org/hcef/index.cfm/ID/159>]. It is a particular political philosophy and strategy. Christian Zionist leaders share 5 core beliefs:

(1) **The Covenant.** God’s covenant with Israel is eternal and unconditional; the promises of land given to Abraham will never be overturned. The church has not replaced Israel; therefore, Israel’s privileges have never been revoked.

(2) **The Church.** God’s plan has always been for the redemption of Israel. When Israel failed to follow Jesus, the church was born as an afterthought or “parenthesis.” At the rapture the church will be removed and Israel will once again become God’s primary agent in the world. We now live in ‘the times of the Gentiles’ that will conclude soon. There are two covenants now at work, that given through Moses and the covenant of Christ. The new covenant in no way makes the older covenant obsolete.

(3) **Blessing Modern Israel.** Genesis 12:3 is applied literally and applied to modern Israel: “I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you.” Christians have a spiritual obligation to bless Israel and “pray for the peace of Jerusalem.” While many Christians throughout history have also believed it important to observe the injunction of Genesis 12:3 in regard to the Jews, Christian Zionism links this specifically to support of the modern state of Israel. To fail to support Israel’s political survival today will incur divine judgment.

(4) **Prophecy.** The prophetic books of the Bible specifically refer to events today, though some may also refer to events in Biblical times. Therefore when we look at, say, Daniel 7, if we possess the right interpretative skills, we can see current events foreshadowed in it. This quest for prophecy has spawned countless books of end-time speculation involving the state of Israel based on Biblical prophecy.

(5) **Modern Israel and Eschatology.** The modern state of Israel is a catalyst for the prophetic end-time countdown. If these are the last days, then we should expect an unraveling of civilization, the rise of evil, the loss of international peace and equilibrium, a coming antichrist, and tests of faithfulness to Israel. Above all, political alignments today will determine our position on the fateful day of Armageddon. Since the crisis of 9/11, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, it has been easy to persuade the public that history is unraveling precisely as Dispensationalism predicted. [<http://www.hcef.org/hcef/index.cfm/ID/159>]

2. *What Is Dispensationalism?*

Historic Premillennialism holds that Christ will return to the earth prior to the Last Day in order to exercise rule over the nations for a thousand years in the last stage of human history. It is pessimistic concerning the role and prospects of the Church in human history; therefore it posits another age, the millennium, between Christ's return and the Last Day, during which Christ rules in person over a theocratic kingdom to which all the nations of the world are subject.

Periods of great world upheaval and crisis have tended to spawn and multiply despair in society, and premillennial visions within Christianity. . . .

Dispensationalism gives premillennialism a complete system. Human history is regarded as a series of ages (dispensations) in which humanity is tested with respect to some aspect revealed of God's will. In each case humankind fails, is judged by God, and then set on the trail under new covenant conditions. (For further detail, see "Dispensationalism," *Minutes*, PCUS, 1944, Part I, pp. 123–27.)

The General Assembly in 1944 was very careful to distinguish premillennialism in general from its specific application in Dispensationalism. It was the latter that was singled out for specific criticism:

It is the unanimous opinion of your Committee that Dispensationalism as defined and set forth above is out of accord with the system of the doctrine set forth in the *Confession of Faith*, not primarily or simply in the field of eschatology, but because it attacks the very heart of the Theology of our Church, which is unquestionably a Theology of one Covenant of Grace. ["Dispensationalism," *Minutes of the General Assembly*, PCUS, 1944, Part I, pp. 123–27.]

We, too, must make important distinctions. Most Christian Zionists are Dispensationalists, but this does not imply that all Dispensationalists are Christian Zionists, especially in respect to political action. Many Dispensationalists still remain completely apart from the U.S. political system, for instance. Further, we cannot assume uniformity on every point. For instance, Item 12-03 states "Finally, pre-millennialist interpretations that underlie Christian Zionism ultimately exclude any validity of the continuity of efficacy of God's covenant with the Jewish people themselves, and ultimately are anti-Semitic." John Hagee, a popular television preacher and Christian Zionist leader who recently delivered \$1 million to Israel [<http://www.hcef.org/hcef/index.cfm/ID/159>], has defended a parallel and enduring covenant with the Jews: "I believe that every Jewish person who lives in the light of the Torah, which is the word of God, has a relationship with God and will come to redemption" ["San Antonio fundamentalist battles anti-Semitism," *Houston Chronicle*, April 30, 1988, sec. 6, pg. 1.]. In such matters, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) must speak with a firm, but careful voice. See also: [<http://www.pcusa.org/ga213/business/OVT0125>] and [<http://www.pcusa.org/theologyandworship/issues/reflection>] "Between Millennia" and "Eschatology: The Doctrine of Last Things."

In a time when the PC(USA) is beset with its own internal disagreements, we should resist the temptation to bolster our own self-confidence by throwing stones at others. Any judgments must be made with great care.

Vote: 64/0/1

Item 12-04. On Urging Peace in Colombia, South America--From the Presbytery of Baltimore.
+ACSWP, ACREC

That the recommendations be approved with amendment. [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through and with brackets; text to be added or inserted is shown with an underline and with brackets.]

“The Presbytery of Baltimore overtures the 216th General Assembly (2004) to do the following:

“[1. Reaffirm the positions of the 210th and 213th General Assemblies (1998) and (2001) that call for ecumenical efforts toward peace in Colombia and call for the United States to demilitarize its anti-drug policies and support in Colombia, that it speak against the violation of human rights, and that aid be in the form of national debt relief and humanitarian and self-developmental grants for the Colombian people.

“[1.] [2.] ~~Join the Presbyterian Church of Colombia, Council of Churches of Colombia, and Colombia's Commission of Human Rights and Peace in calling for the transformation of the vicious circle of death and destruction produced by military aid into a ‘virtuous circle’ of abundant life and peace, so that the Colombian people will begin to receive a different type of message from the north, sent by the church, a message of solidarity and respect for human life. [Join the Presbyterian Church of Colombia, other Christian churches, and other Christian organizations in calling for the redirection of United States military aid into social, educational, health, and developmental assistance in the hope that peace would be restored.]~~

“[2.] [3.] ~~Decry the characterization of human rights workers as terrorists.~~

“[3.] [4.] ~~[Commend the Nonviolent Communities of Resistance in Colombia] [Support and accompany the ‘communities of peace and resistance’] who reject all military involvement [by guerillas, paramilitary and Colombian armed forces].~~

“[5. Call for the immediate closure of the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, previously known as the School of the Americas.]

“[4.] [6.] Stand with our sisters and brothers in Colombia who are witnessing to the truth that peace cannot be achieved by [armed military] violence.

“[7. Because of the dire plight of more than 3 million internally displaced people in Colombia, including the Colombian Church, we urge the members of the PC(USA) to pray for displaced people, and to provide direct aid to the church, for their work with the displaced; and we direct the Stated Clerk and Presbyterian Washington Office to use every

opportunity to urge the United States government to provide food, water, medicine, and other necessities to Colombia rather than weapons.

“[8. Commend the ministry and work of the Reverend Dr. Alice Winters with the Reformed University of Colombia, School of Theology. Winters has served on behalf of the PC(USA) since 1977.]

“[5:] [9.] Urge Presbyterians to [go to Colombia to get to know our sisters and brothers there] [learn about the situation through study and organized visits] and better understand the realities [they] [Colombians] deal with every day.

“[10. Call upon all transnational corporations operating in Colombia to utilize their influence to promote publicly peace and justice, protect their employees from violence in the workplace and as they participate in trade union activities, and contribute to the well-being of the communities where they are located.

“[11. Commend to the church the resource created by the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, in cooperation with the PC(USA) Office for Latin American and the Caribbean, entitled ‘Colombia,’(PDS # 70-270-04-015), which is available from the Peacemaking Office and through the PC(USA) Website.]

Vote: 64/1/3

\$ Item 12-05. Iraq: Our Responsibility and the Future.

That the recommendations be approved with the following amendments.

1. Amend the third paragraph of the resolution as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through and with brackets; text to be added or inserted is shown with an underline and with brackets.]

“Opposition to the military action against Iraq based on just war principles and other principles of conscience, while not unanimous among Presbyterians, has been sufficiently widespread to indicate much concern. From the beginning, it has been the judgment of many church leaders, both in the United States and elsewhere, that an [~~essentially unilateral~~] invasion of Iraq has been unwise, immoral, and illegal. The [216th] General Assembly [(2004)] concurs with this judgment. That judgment has also been evident in widespread public feeling in numerous countries, including countries long friendly to the United States.”

2. Amend the fourth paragraph of the resolution as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through and with brackets; text to be added or inserted is shown with an underline and with brackets.] [Note that the last two sentences of paragraph four become a new paragraph.]

“[~~Since ‘God alone is Lord of the conscience,’ those who have come to a different judgment are entitled to their convictions, but they are not entitled to regard those with other views as ‘unpatriotic’ or somehow lacking the moral stamina to combat evil.]~~”

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[Presbyterians affirm, 'God alone is Lord of the conscience.' Every member of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is both entitled, and called upon, to consider this matter prayerfully and lovingly. Every Presbyterian, however, is also called upon to treat those with whom they disagree with respect. We deplore the actions of those who regard persons with positions different from their own as being unpatriotic or un-Christian.]

“Moreover, the military action taken against Iraq is not directly or necessarily connected to the effort to deal with the threat of terrorism. It raises different issues and must be assessed using different moral considerations.”

3. Amend paragraphs five and six by merging them into one paragraph to read as follows:

“Despite the moral cloud surrounding the military invasion of Iraq and growing concern about the loss of life on both sides of the conflict, there is widespread agreement that the United States bears a legal and moral burden for the reconstruction of Iraq. Many people feel this burden can only be carried out properly and successfully through full cooperation with the international community, especially the United Nations. The complexities and difficulties in the road ahead must not be the occasion for indecision or for seeking simplistic solutions in the momentous task of nation building. Acknowledging the moral perplexity caused by Operation Iraqi Freedom, the 216th General Assembly (2004) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) does the following:”

4. Amend Recommendations 5. through 7. as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through and with brackets; text to be added or inserted is shown with an underline and with brackets.]

“5. Urges the United States government to move speedily to restore sovereignty to Iraq, to internationalize the reconstruction efforts without penalty to those nations that chose not to endorse the U.S.-led invasion, and to recognize the United Nations as the body most suitable to facilitate the transition to peace, freedom, and participatory governance in Iraq. We commend the administration for its recent efforts to work through the United Nations to help Iraq people take charge of their own political destiny and urge the United States to recognize that the United Nations should play the leading role in helping the transition to Iraqi self-rule. [In light of the transfer of power from the representatives of the United States Government to the Interim Governing Council in Iraq, we urge that further steps be taken to internationalize the reconstruction efforts and to help the people of Iraq to take charge of their own political destiny. Meanwhile, we continue in prayer for peace and stability in that country.]

“6. [~~We suggest~~] [Suggests] that the United Nations, with more than fifty years of experience of peace-building in more than 170 countries, play a lead role in the recruiting and training of persons who have special skills in establishing the rule of law—police, judges, [~~lawyers,~~] court staff, and corrections officers—to establish peace and stability in Iraq and other areas of the world striving to build post-conflict stability and order. The deployment of military personnel for this purpose should be avoided as much as possible as it places additional burden, responsibility, and need for training that stretches the current forces beyond their expertise.

~~“7. [We deplore the use of torture against prisoners. Such use violates international law, the best traditions of our country, Christian morality, and just-war teaching.] [Condemns in the strongest possible terms torture and abuse of prisoners held any place in the world, in United States government, military, or civilian custody, and we oppose any continuation of this practice.]~~ As a church in the United States, we acknowledge and repent of our complicity in the culture leading to such acts, confess our collective sinfulness that is at the root of this practice, and ask God’s forgiveness.”

5. Add a new Recommendation 9. to read as follows:

“9. Supports the people of Iraq on a long-term basis in rebuilding their government and nation without prejudice to any ethnic and religious group and urge the United States government to provide assistance to Iraq in the long-term rebuilding efforts, including working for relief of foreign debt.”

6. Amend Recommendations 9. through 12. as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through and with brackets; text to be added or inserted is shown with an underline and with brackets.]

~~“[9.] [10.]~~ Commends the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly for his strong leadership in ~~[opposing, on the basis of previous General Assembly policies, the U.S. led intervention in Iraq,~~ **[representing policies of the General Assembly and brothers and sisters in the church at large,]** and for his leadership among world religious leaders in calling for interfaith cooperation to address the crisis created by this action for relations between Christians and Muslims.

~~“[10:] [11.]~~ Expresses deep regret over the failure of the current administration, prior to military action, to meet with religious leaders seeking to offer a full explanation of the basis for their opposition to an invasion of Iraq, and the subsequent unwillingness of the administration to meet with those leaders to discuss the role the churches might play in creating a free and prosperous future for Iraq.

~~“[11:] [12.]~~ Approves the report as a whole for churchwide study and implementation (noting that the study developed for *Iraq and Beyond*, approved by 215th General Assembly (2003), has continuing usefulness for the church: PDS order # 68-600-03-005).

~~“[12:] [13.]~~ Directs the Office of the General Assembly to publish the resolution (with recommendations and background rationale) and place the document as a whole on the PC(USA) Website, sending a copy to the presbytery and synod resource centers, the libraries of the theological seminaries, making available a copy for each requesting session or middle governing body, and directs the Stated Clerk to notify the entire church of the availability of this paper on the Website.

7. Add new recommendations 14. and 15. to read as follows:

“[14. Due to the immense sacrifice of our partner churches in Iraq, calls on the PC(USA) to give sacrificially to the real needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ. We call on the General Assembly Council (GAC) to immediately develop and promote a co-

ordinated effort to highlight the Extra Commitment Opportunity titled, “Iraq—The Peace Fund for Solidarity with the Churches” (E051722).

“[15. Calls on the GAC to research and dialogue with our partner churches in Iraq in order to present at the 217th General Assembly (2006) a plan for the use of personnel (mission co-workers, mission volunteers, etc) and other resources that responds to the needs and concerns of our brothers and sisters in Iraq.]”

Vote: 63/1/1

[Financial Implications: 2004: \$950 (Per Capita-OGA)]

*\$ Item 12-06. Resolution on Violence, Religion, and Terrorism.

That the recommendations be approved.

Vote: 63/0/1

[Financial Implications: 2005: \$14,605 (Mission-Restricted)]

*Item 12-07. Commitment to Peacemaking.

That the recommendation be approved with amendment.

1. Amend Recommendation 1. as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through and with brackets; text to be added or inserted is shown with an underline and with brackets.]

“1. Commends [~~those sessions~~] [the 4,723 sessions (as of June 4, 2004)] that have adopted the “Commitment to Peacemaking[.]” [and the 216th General Assembly (2004) gives thanks for the faithful work for Christ’s peace by the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program staff and countless volunteers throughout the PC(USA) for twenty-five years.]”

2. Amend Recommendation 6. as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through and with brackets; text to be added or inserted is shown with an underline and with brackets.]

“6. Commends the [~~seventy-one~~] [seventy-two] presbyteries and six synods that have 50 percent or more of their congregations whose sessions have adopted the “Commitment to Peacemaking.””

Vote: 66/0/1

Item 12-08. Call to Confession of Prison Abuse in Iraq.

That the recommendations be approved with amendment.

Vote: 53/5/5

1. Strike the title and insert new copy to read as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through and with brackets; text to be added or inserted is shown with an underline and with brackets.]

“~~[CALL TO CONFESSION OF PRISON ABUSE IN IRAQ]~~ [A Resolution and Confession on the Torture and Abuse of Prisoners]”

2. Strike Recommendation 2. (including letter and prayer) and insert new copy to read as follows:

2. The treatment of those incarcerated in the naval base in Guantanamo, Cuba, and in the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq (and perhaps elsewhere), has highlighted serious legal and moral issues that cannot be ignored and must not be allowed to pass unexamined. Violations of international law as well as serious moral malfeasance are involved.

Such treatment is contrary to the Geneva Convention Relative to Treatment of Prisoners of War (1949), particularly Articles 13, 14, 15, 17, and 18. Article 17, Fifth Paragraph, provides:

Neither physical or mental torture nor any other form of coercion may be inflicted on prisoners of war to secure from them information of any kind whatever. Prisoners of war who refuse to answer may not be threatened, insulted, or exposed to any unpleasant or disadvantageous treatment of any kind.

Objections to such practices have been voiced by lawyers within the armed services as well as by human rights organizations. Such practices have been deplored by a great majority of the citizens of our country, quite irrespective of their views as to the legitimacy of taking military action against Iraq. These actions have undercut American claims to a moral high ground and opened the way for enemies to maltreat members of our own society that fall into their hands. Moreover, they constitute flagrant violations of the Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, to which the United States is a signatory [<http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/911.htm>].

As citizens of our country, members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) have been urged to engage in repentance for these actions, even if their personal responsibility for them is indirect and minimal. That call for repentance is an indication of the extent to which these actions must be deplored.

But efforts must be made to ensure that such actions are eliminated from future practice. This can be done only if there is a complete and adequate understanding as to why they have arisen—a matter of present uncertainty and possible confusion.

[3. Further, efforts must be made to ensure that such torture and abuse do not occur in the future. To that end, the 216th General Assembly (2004) directs the Stated Clerk to take the following actions:

[a. Commend all who have brought this prison abuse to the attention of the public as well as all who have recognized the seriousness of the issues raised and the need to deal vigorously with the policy and administrative questions that are involved;

[b. Urge the U.S. Congress to direct an appropriate independent and formal inquiry to determine what led to these events. This body should have full investigative powers and issue its findings publicly.]

[c. Urge government officials to develop safeguards that will serve to prevent such behavior from arising in the future.]

[4. Write and send a pastoral letter to the churches, communicating the intent of this resolution.]

Commissioners' Resolutions

*\$ Item 12-09. On Establishing a Palestine Working Group.

In response to Item 12-09, the 216th General Assembly (2004) approves the following:

1. Direct that the formation of a Worldwide Ministries Division-related Palestine Mission Network move forward as soon as possible, for the purpose of creating currents of wider and deeper Presbyterian involvement with Palestinian partners, aimed at demonstrating solidarity and changing the conditions that erode the humanity of Palestinians living in Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza.

2. Authorize a feasibility study to be conducted by the Worldwide Ministries Division (WMD) of the General Assembly Council to explore the dimensions, costs, appropriate development approach, stability of political conditions, availability of expertise, and possible sources of funding, of an intentional and systematic effort of development and compassionate action in Palestine either by or through a team connected to the WMD-related Palestine Mission Network, and to make recommendations for concrete measurable action plans to the General Assembly Council at its fall meeting in 2005.

Vote: 66/0/1

[Original Financial Implications: 2005: \$92,360; 2006: \$59,930; 2007: \$60,740; 2008: \$52,090 (Mission-Unrestricted)]

[Committee Action: 2005: \$15,000; 2006: \$0; 2007: \$0; 2008: \$0]

Item 12-10. Recommendation 1. On Calling on the Stated Clerk to Justify His Endorsement of the World Council of Churches and Reviewing PC(USA) Relationship with the World Council of Churches.

That the recommendation be disapproved.

Vote: 59/7/0