



Church of the Brethren General Board

Statement on Jerusalem

March 12, 1996

The Christian community throughout the world affirms its spiritual and historical roots in Jerusalem. Sacred to Jews, Muslims, and Christians, Jerusalem is also a disputed city and the symbolic center of much of the conflict in the Middle East.

The status of Jerusalem will be of particular importance over the next several months because the Israelis and the Palestinians have agreed that the “final status” of Jerusalem will be determined between the parties during talks scheduled to begin in May 1996. As these talks begin, we recognize that the stakes are extremely high, as both the Israeli and Palestinian peoples claim Jerusalem as their capital. The Church of the Brethren joins with Muslims, Jews, and Christians at home and in the Middle East to support principles of justice, religious liberty and peaceful resolution of the question of Jerusalem.

For many years the Church of the Brethren has appealed for the termination of violence and counter-violence by all parties in the Middle East, opposed the Israeli acquisition of land by force, and has stressed the importance of international efforts to assure the legitimate rights of self-determination for the Palestinian people as well as the legitimate security interests of Israel. Specifically, in relation to the city of Jerusalem, we also affirm the following principles.

1. A just and lasting peace in the Middle East is inseparable from a Jerusalem that is open to entry and free movement for all peoples, including freedom of worship and full freedom of access to its holy places.
2. Mutual recognition of Jerusalem by Christians, Muslims, and Jews as the sacred city for all and support for full access to its holy places will play a significant role in defusing interreligious conflict among the three great monotheistic religions.
3. Confidence-building measures, such as the immediate cessation of land confiscation and settlement building around Jerusalem by the Israeli government, just allocation of building permits to alleviate overcrowding and substandard housing in Palestinian neighborhoods, and provisions to protect human rights, are imperative to foster religious liberty and undergird the peace process.
4. Religious, economic and cultural institutions of both Israelis and Palestinians must be allowed to flourish in Jerusalem.
5. A jointly-administered municipality—in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 242—rather than a monopoly of sovereignty by either party, will enhance the growth and development needs of both Israelis and Palestinians.

We also urge the United States government to maintain an active and balanced role in the peace process, recognizing its unique relationship with the government of Israel, the legitimate claims of the Palestinian people, and the importance of a just and equitable resolution of the status of Jerusalem. Toward this aim, the U.S. embassy in Tel Aviv should not be relocated until the permanent status negotiations on Jerusalem are concluded.

A striking biblical image is Jesus weeping for and praying for Jerusalem. In these times, we encourage our membership to join hands and hearts to pray and work to bring peace with justice in Jerusalem.

Applicable Church of the Brethren policy:

1980 Annual Conference: Time so Urgent

1986 Annual Conference: Making the Connection

1987 Annual Conference: A Quest for Order

1989 Annual Conference: No Force in Religion: Religious Liberty at the 21st Century

1991 Annual Conference: Peacemaking: The Calling of God's People in History

1975 General Board: Peace in the Middle East

1978 General Board: Middle East Peace Efforts

1988 General Board: Palestinian-Israeli Affairs

1994 General Board: Statement Regarding the Hebron Massacre

Passed by General Board

12 March 1996