



Community of Christ

March 6, 2026

Dear Michigan Mission Center leaders, members, and friends,

I am writing today to keep our attention on the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza. While a fragile ceasefire has been in place since mid-October, I remain deeply concerned about the desperately slow arrival of food and medical supplies to those in need. According to the United Nations, the flow of aid into Gaza remains well below what is needed to prevent widespread famine and starvation.

I am aware that there may be a variety of perspectives on the many years of conflict and oppression in the region. The purpose of this letter and the attached resources is to encourage us to have necessary and difficult discussions, to better understand why this matters to Community of Christ in Michigan, and to encourage those who are concerned to continue to advocate for an end to the famine and suffering.



We are called to be a prophetic people devoted to the worth of all persons and committed to abolishing poverty and ending needless suffering. The crisis in Gaza has been described by the UN as forced starvation and genocide, and such conditions require a prophetic response.

Being a prophetic people requires us to pay attention and name suffering where we see it. While the ceasefire and opening of humanitarian corridors represents progress, it is not sufficient to end needless suffering and starvation. It is critical that we do not lose sight of the ongoing suffering in the region and that we continue to pressure governments to ensure adequate humanitarian aid reaches those who need it most.

We are compelled by our Christian faith, our theological heritage, and the prophetic tradition of Jesus to speak truth about suffering and stand with those who have no voice. We have been called to "Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God" (Doctrine and Covenants 16:3c). This foundational conviction declares that every human being, without exception, bears the sacred image of the Divine. The gospel we proclaim centers on Jesus, who declared himself anointed "to bring good news to the poor... to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free" (Luke 4:18).

As of November 2025, [more than 69,000 Palestinians](#) have been killed since October 7, 2023, according to the Gaza Health Ministry. Among them are at least 20,000 children. Due to ongoing violence, inadequate medical care, and severe food shortages, children continue to die at devastating

rates. According to the World Food Programme, aid deliveries remain far below what is needed, with WFP bringing in only half of its monthly target during the ceasefire period and only 30 percent of required supplies in November.



Image from UNRWA Situation Report: [UNRWA Situation Report #210 on the Humanitarian Crisis in the Gaza Strip and the Occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem | UNRWA](#)

UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell, speaking to the UN Security Council in July 2024, reported that children in Gaza were being killed at a rate of more than one child per hour during the height of the conflict. She told the Security Council: "Over the past 21 months of war, more than 17,000 children have reportedly been killed and 33,000 injured in Gaza. An average of 28 children have been killed each day – the equivalent of an entire classroom. Consider that for a moment. A whole classroom of children killed, every day for nearly two years." These are not mere numbers; these are beloved children of God, each with names, dreams, and families who mourn them.

Following in the tradition of Frederick M. Smith and our Social Gospel heritage, we understand that the gospel must address not only individual hearts but the social conditions and structures that shape human flourishing. We cannot remain silent when such devastation befalls the most vulnerable. As the prophet Micah reminds us, the Lord requires us "to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8).

Our Call to Action

- **To Our Government:** All members are encouraged to call upon our elected representatives to use America's considerable influence to demand the increased flow of necessary resources into Gaza.
- **To Our Congregations:** All congregations are encouraged to explore the attached resources for further study and discussion. We can have difficult conversations through our shared faith and hope for peace and justice.
- **To Ourselves:** All members are invited to commit to examining how our faith calls us to respond to global suffering and to deepen their own education and understanding of the suffering of those in Gaza.

This is not about choosing sides in a political conflict—it is about choosing the side of life, the side of children, the side of human dignity. We believe in a God who weeps with those who weep and who calls us to be instruments of peace and healing. We believe in a God who is working to bring forth communities where former enemies become neighbors, where children of all nations can play safely together, and where God's peaceful kingdom becomes reality on earth.

I am committed to ongoing prayer, education, and action that honors the image of God in every person affected by this crisis and I invite you to join me. I know these are complex issues and we may

not fully agree. Our faith requires us to speak out about genocide and forced starvation and I am pleased to offer the attached resources for individual and congregation study.

"Learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow."

-Isaiah 1:1

In the spirit of community and Christ's love,

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Resources for Going Deeper

Educational Materials:

Community of Christ Resources

- See the attached document World Conference Resolutions and reference 1311 which calls for “for the cessation of Israeli military occupation and illegal settlements in the West Bank.” This WCR upholds the equal rights for Israelis and Palestinians to coexist.
- See the attached document Statement on Genocide by the Human Rights Team released in the July/August 2024 Herald.
- See the attached statement from the Human Rights Team on Israel-Hamas war and the World Church’s Peace and Justice Team statement on Gaza, which can be found here: <https://cofchrist.org/news/excerpt-of-statement-on-gaza/>.
- See the link letter from Churches for Middle East Peace addressing the war in Gaza which the church signed. (<https://cmep.org/july-2024-global-bishops-letter/>)
- [Listen to the podcast, Faith Unfiltered #836 Grounds for Peace | Israel, Palestine, and Zionism](#)

UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East)

- [Remarks by UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini at the UNGA Side-Event “Call to Action for Palestinian Children in the West Bank and Gaza” | UNRWA](#)
- [Two years too long - Calls for ceasefire in Gaza | UNRWA](#)

World Council of Churches

- Stand Up for Children In War - Faith Community Action
 - [Engagement Options – How you can Stand Up for Children in War](#)
- [In standing up for children’s rights, WCC urges “our task is not only to protect children but to sustain the future” | World Council of Churches](#)

BDS Movement: Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) is a Palestinian-led movement for freedom, justice and equality. BDS upholds the simple principle that Palestinians are entitled to the same rights as the rest of humanity.

Israel is occupying and colonising Palestinian land, discriminating against Palestinian citizens of Israel, and denying Palestinian refugees the right to return to their homes. Inspired by the South African anti-apartheid movement, the BDS call urges action to pressure Israel to comply with international law.

BDS is now a vibrant global movement made up of unions, academic associations, churches, and grassroots movements across the world. Since its launch in 2005, BDS has had a significant impact and is effectively challenging international support for Israeli apartheid and settler-colonialism.

<https://bdsmovement.net/what-bds>

Discussion Questions for Groups

1. Do you typically root for the favorite or the underdog?

- Who is your favorite underdog?
- Why?
- What makes you root for the underdog?
- What makes you root for the favorite?
- Star Wars - Empire vs The Rebellion, Rocky vs Apollo, USA vs Russia in Hockey (Do you believe in miracles?), Karate Kid, My Cousin Vinny

2. How were the largest human genocides / mass atrocities – Nazi Germany murdering 6 million Jewish people, Stalin killing 20+ million people, Mao Zedong starving 15 million+ people, Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge killing 2 million people – able to happen?

- How should we respond to violence in the world?
- Are there things we can do to make a difference?
- What would Jesus say?

3. Recognizing the Community of Christ's focus on peace, how should the church respond?

- Public statements on the church position?
- Collaboration with entities that support peace in the area impacted?
- Direct action - with people on the ground?
- Political engagement of our Senators, Representatives, and President telling them of our position?
- Building community and engaging in discussion?
- Making your neighbors relevant?

4. What if the cause is not overly popular?

If we look at the situation in Gaza – long term conflict, religious / political divides, innocent people injured / killed on both sides, loss of hope – we often find it easy to side with Israel based on their history and allegiance with the US but is Israel really the underdog here?

- Significantly more Palestinians have been killed by Israel than Israelis by Palestinians
- Israeli response to conflict is significantly one sided given that Israel has significantly better arms than the Palestinians
- Hamas does not represent all Palestinians. They are one violent voice and are supported by other violent voices (Iran and Hezbollah). Palestinian civilians are often caught in the crossfire
- Israeli control of Palestinian areas for many decades and the ongoing conflict have deeply worsened Palestinian economy
- For over 58 years, Israel has maintained control over Gaza's borders, airspace, and territorial waters. For the past 18 years, a full blockade has been imposed on all sides of Gaza.

With this view Israel looks a lot less like the underdog.

5. How would you compare Israeli actions in Palestine with the Germans actions towards Jews in World War II? (contrast Warsaw Ghetto)

- Starvation a key component
- Closed environment with limited entry / exit by civilians
- Regular humanitarian violations – attacks on hospitals, schools, aid workers, food trucks, and civilians. These are war crimes

6. How bad does a situation have to get before we stop supporting Israel economically and emotionally?

7. If you have to explain your position / actions to your kids and grandkids, what would you say?

Resources for Group or Independent Study

Movies to Watch: Born in Gaza, 5 Broken Cameras, The Present, Disturbing the Peace, Against the Wall, Area C, Jenin, Jenin, Gaza, Burdus, Like Twenty Impossibles, Amreeka, When I Saw You, Mayor

Non Fiction Reading: Freedom is a Constant Struggle by Angela Y. Davis, After the Last Sky by Edward Said, The Hundred Years' War on Palestine by Rashid Khalidi, Palestine Speaks: Narratives of Life Under Occupation The Question of Palestine by Edward W. Said, The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine by Ilan Pappé, Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestinian Question by Edward Said and Christofer Hitchens, I saw Ramallah by Mourid Barghouti, In Search of Fatima: A Palestinian Story by Ghada Karmi, Kingdom of Olives and Ash: Writers Confront the Occupation Edited by Michael Chabon and Ayelet Waldman, Our Harsh Logic: Israeli Soldiers' Testimonies from the Occupied

Territories by Breaking the Silence, My Father was a Freedom Fighter: Gaza's Untold Story by Ramzy Baroud, A Child in Palestine: The Cartoons of Naji al-Ali, Palestinian Walks: Notes on a Vanishing Landscape by Raja Shehadeh

Fictional Reading: Palestine's Children: Returning to Haifa and Other Stories by Ghassan Kanafani, Ruination by Fatima C. Mansour, Salt Houses by Hala Alyan, Specters by Radwa Ashour, The Lemon Tree by Sandy Tolán, Mornings in Jenin by Susan Abulhawa, Palestine by Joe Sacco, Exhausted on the Cross by Najwan Darwish

Podcasts: This is Palestine by the Institute of Middle Eastern Understanding (IMEU), The Story of Sumud, Remembrance and Resistance, The Palestine Pod, Rethinking Palestine

Sample Homily on Gaza

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist one who is evil. But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matthew 5:38-39).

I was in junior high (now known as middle school) when I first discovered Leon Uris and Mila 18. Mila 18 is the story of Jews in the Warsaw ghetto and all of the unbelievable things that happened to them from being forced to wear a Star of David indicating they were Jewish, to having all movement in and out of the ghetto restricted, to being assaulted and murdered in the ghetto, to being rounded up and transported to death camps like Treblinka and Auschwitz.

As you read Uris' story you're touched by the absolute evil that took place there.

At the start of World War 2 approximately 380,000 Jews lived in Warsaw; of the 380,000 approximately 300,000 were murdered by the Nazis.

Reading Mila 18 creates tons of questions How can such evil exist? Why didn't anybody do anything to stop them? Why didn't the Jews fight back? Could this happen again? Who would have thought that 85 years later we would be seeing a replay in Gaza and the perpetrator would be the Jewish state of Israel?

The current events in Gaza are a complex story of competing agendas, loss of hope, and violence that have been going on for decades / centuries where the two sides are unwilling to find common ground.

On October 7, 2023 actions by Hamas killed 1,195 people and about 250 people were taken hostage. It

was a violent assault on Israel and Israel responded in anger killing over 18,000 people in Gaza and another 299 in the West Bank in 2023. Extending beyond 2023, the conflict in Gaza has killed tens of thousands more – and exact count is impossible – including Palestinians, aid workers, journalists, and non-Palestinians trapped in Gaza. Israel complains that there is no way to reason or negotiate with Hamas and violence is the only response.

Understand that the ability to turn your cheek when it is being actively slapped is really hard. The desire to respond, to remove the slapper, to stop being slapped in future is often something that builds from our core being. Responding with violence is typical and often expected.

But as Christ shared, there is another way.

As followers of Christ we are called to respond differently. The act of offering the other cheek, seeking peace, and creating hope.

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