



Council of Bishops
The United Methodist Church



United Methodist Church Bishops condemn violence in the Middle East, call for prayer and action

October 9, 2023

They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. (Isaiah 2:4)

In a world already consumed with political unrest and conflict, the recent attacks by Hamas against Israel only add to the reality that the prophetic words from Isaiah are needed now more than ever.

As a people who pray for and work toward peace, we in the United Methodist family are appalled, and dismayed by the animosities and inhumane actions undertaken by Hamas. The declaration of war on the part of Israel as a result is also deeply saddening. In just a few hours since this latest outbreak of violence more than 1000 people have died.

We condemn the Hamas militants who have killed and captured civilians, women and children in Israel. We equally decry the deaths of innocent civilians, women and children caught in the crossfire of the Israeli retaliation in the Gaza Strip.

Our own Book of Resolutions (2016) states clearly, “We seek for all people in the Middle East region an end to military occupation, freedom from violence, and full respect for the human rights of all under international law.”

As a result, today we call on all United Methodists to renew a deepened commitment to pray for those who have been injured, abducted, or killed, and to deepen our prayers for those who have suddenly lost a loved one.

The power of and belief in our intercessions cannot be underestimated. Pray for those who are providing support and care for those directly affected. More than that, pray that God's peace will permeate throughout the land and in the hearts of all those who are initiating this conflict.

In addition, we call on all congregations and leaders to begin initiating special offerings, directed to our United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), to provide specific resources to assist in providing shelter, food, and other necessities to those who have been left homeless, helpless, and afraid.

Friends, we are called to be a people of prayer, a people of hope, and a people of action. Our role should never be minimized, especially in a time when global conflicts are emerging with more frequency. As we watch the news unfold, let us not delay in moving into meaningful responses.

Most of all, let us remain a people of hope who look to the fulfilment of those prophetic words by Isaiah. We look to the days when:

The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. In that day, the wolf and the lamb will live together; the leopard will lie down with the baby goat.

(Isaiah 11:5-6)

May it be so. May it be so.

Amen.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas J. Bickerton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton
President - Council of Bishops
The United Methodist Church