Resolution #1 Southeastern Iowa Synod Assembly

WHEREAS, we followers of Christ are called by God in our baptismal covenant to work for justice and peace on the earth; and

WHEREAS, the 2019 ELCA Advocacy Policy Priorities includes a commitment to “… work to build broad support for international development and humanitarian aid in Congress. Specifically, we will:

• Advocate to bolster funding levels to international poverty-focused programs as appropriate in the International Affairs budget;
• Oppose efforts by Administration or Congress to cut funds to these programs…”1; and

WHEREAS, the United States Government has historically provided direct aid to the Palestinian Authority, through the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and other agents; and

WHEREAS, this aid was severely cut in 20182, and as a result of the Anti-Terrorism Clarification Act legislation enacted in 20183, which amends that Anti-Terrorism Act4. The Anti-Terrorism Clarification Act as written may result in no aid being provided to the Palestinian people by the United States in the future and have a devastating effect on life-saving services affecting over 5 million Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank; and

WHEREAS, one of the institutions directly affected by the cuts is Augusta Victoria Hospital (AVH), a program of the Lutheran World Federation, which is a center of medical excellence in East Jerusalem, providing specialty care for all Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza that is not available in other hospitals; and

WHEREAS, for several years AVH and other East Jerusalem hospitals have been facing cash-flow problems because the Palestinian Authority has not been able to pay the bills of the patients which it refers to these hospitals, with total debt for the six hospitals at $80 million as of March 1, 2019, with AVH debt of $35 million5; and

WHEREAS, in FY 2017, $25 million in US funding was appropriated by Congress for the hospitals but later repurposed by the Administration and therefore permanently lost to the hospital; and

WHEREAS, future funding is now in doubt because of restrictions placed on aid by the Anti-Terrorism Clarification Act; therefore, be it

5 “Questions and Answers, Augusta Victoria Hospital and the East Jerusalem Hospitals Network”, by Jerusalem Program, LWF World Service, March 15, 2019, which see.
RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Iowa Synod Assembly encourages ministers of Word and Service and ministers of Word and Sacrament to learn more about these issues; and to encourage congregation members to learn more and to engage in advocacy to request the President of the United States and all applicable legislators to amend the Anti-Terrorism Clarification Act of 2018 to remove legislative barriers to future funding of US humanitarian assistance to West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem;

RESOLVED that the Southeastern Iowa Synod Assembly memorialize the 2019 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to request Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton and synodical bishops, to request the President of the United States and all applicable legislators to restore the FY 2018 funding to the East Jerusalem Hospitals, and continue funding at 2018 levels until the Israeli/Palestinian conflict is resolved;

RESOLVED that the Southeastern Iowa Synod Assembly memorialize the 2019 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to request Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton and synodical bishops, to request the President of the United States and all applicable legislators to amend the Anti-Terrorism Clarification Act of 2018 to remove legislative barriers to future funding of US humanitarian assistance to West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Christine Cowan, chair
Southeastern Iowa Synod Peace Not Walls Working Group

Adopted