

Note to Presbytery of Yukon Commissioners: This overture is forwarded for your consideration by the Utqiagvik Presbyterian Church. At their November 21, 2023 meeting, the Utqiagvik session approved this overture to be considered by Presbytery of Yukon. If this overture is approved by our presbytery, we will seek concurrence (agreement) from at least one other presbytery. Should Presbytery of Yukon approve this overture and another presbytery concurs, this draft overture will then be considered for approval at the 226th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in Salt Lake City during June 25 – July 4, 2024.

Overture from the Presbytery of Yukon to the 226th General Assembly (2024)

Recommendation:

The Presbytery of Yukon overtures the 226th General Assembly (2024) to utilize the Gospel of Love as a guiding principle in its advocacy and humanitarian efforts, particularly in addressing the conflict between Israel and Hamas, with the aim to foster peace, reconciliation, and justice in the region.

The proposition is thus: The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) should apply the Gospel of Love (Matthew 22:37-40) to its approach in dealing with this conflict by implementing this three-fold approach to a peaceful solution:

1. Advocate for Peace and Justice

- Advocate for policies such as a two-state solution that denounce violence from all sides, drawing from biblical imperatives of justice and peace (Micah 6:8; Matthew 5:9, Romans 12:21).
- Justification: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." (Matthew 5:9)

2. Implement Humanitarian Action

- Increase support for humanitarian efforts to provide essential care to those affected by the conflict, reflecting Christ's compassion for the suffering (Matthew 25:35-40).
- Justification: "For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in." (Matthew 25:35)

3. Promote Dialogue and Understanding

- Create platforms for dialogue that includes diverse voices, fostering reconciliation in alignment with the Gospel (Romans 12:18, 2 Corinthians 5:18-19).
- Justification: "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." (Romans 12:18)

Rationale:

By implementing this three-fold approach, the Church can act as an agent of transformation, using its resources and influence to promote a peaceful resolution to the conflict, thereby witnessing to the power of the Gospel of Love.

The Gospel of Love, as taught by Jesus Christ, calls for active engagement in the lives of others, extending beyond mere sentiment to tangible actions that demonstrate care and concern for the well-being of all. This principle is deeply rooted in Christian Scripture and tradition, encapsulated in the Great Commandment to love God and our neighbor (Matthew 22:37-40). The current rule of engagement in the Israel-Hamas conflict has often been characterized by retaliatory violence and a cyclical nature that perpetuates suffering. A new approach, grounded in unconditional love and non-violent action, is needed to break the cycle of violence, and achieve lasting peace.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has a history of global mission work that includes peace-making initiatives. By advocating for policies that promote peace and justice, such as a two-state solution, and providing humanitarian aid, the Church can embody the compassion of Christ. The Church's involvement in the conflict, guided by the Gospel of Love, can serve as a testament to the power of love to overcome hostility and build bridges of hope.

The crisis persists due to a lack of widespread, concerted efforts to address the underlying issues with a compassionate, creative, and principled approach informed by the Gospel. If unaddressed, the conflict threatens to continue the cycle of violence, leading to further loss of life, violations of human rights, and impediments to peace.