



# THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

## Dakotas-Minnesota Area

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Dear Siblings in Christ,

I don't know about you, but I have struggled this past week. I have struggled to find the words—words that need to be spoken—and words that need to be heard. Like many, I have grappled to make sense of the Hamas attack against Israel, Israel's build up along the border of Gaza, missiles raining down, war being declared and my own deep conviction that as people of faith we should not sit in idle privilege and do nothing in times such as these.

I have pressed and pleaded with myself to not turn away— disciplining myself to look at images coming out of Israel and Gaza. Images that are hard. Images that reveal the incredible evil that has been done. Images that bear witness to the magnitude of death and destruction that is nearly unfathomable.

Each day, I have given myself grace and space as I learned more about the atrocities perpetrated against civilian young adults, children, babies, seniors, Holocaust survivors, and families whose entire villages were systematically wiped out. Grace and space mixed with the privilege of time. Time marked with sighs too deep for words. Space that gave birth to familiar scriptures stepping into this time of confusion and disbelief: “A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more...” (Matthew 2:18).

It has been important for me to listen to the stories of those being remembered and memorialized.

I have granted myself permission to study Hamas—I knew a little, but not enough. I have reminded myself that when we talk about Hamas and the Palestinian people, we must remember they are not one and the same. Palestinians are an ethnically and culturally diverse group of people, including Muslims, Christians, and other minorities. Many live in refugee camps located in Gaza and the West Bank. Hamas is considered a political and militant terroristic organization by the U.S., Israel, and many other western countries. It has been sobering to consider the enormity and barbarity of the Hamas attack and Israel's retaliatory response that will undoubtedly change both Palestine and Israel forever.

I have also invited myself into the practices of my faith—including prayer and action. (I especially like [this prayer for peace in Israel and Palestine](#).)

The sacred scripture reminds us that, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matthew 5:9). It is our divine calling to actively seek and promote peace. This includes praying for those affected by violence and for the perpetrators to find a path of peace and reconciliation.



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Our faith calls us to engage in dialogues that promote understanding and respect for all people. We stand against violence and any form of injustice that leads to conflict. Instead, we advocate for a world where conflicts are resolved through peaceful means, where love and compassion triumph over injustice, hatred, and hostility.

Amid these challenging times, we as United Methodists must reaffirm our commitment to nonviolent responses and the inclusion of all voices harmed by the conflict— including Muslim, Christian, and Jewish—in seeking a just and durable peace. We pray for the victims and their families, for the healing of communities and nations torn apart by violence, for humanitarian efforts to enter in, and for the wisdom and guidance of world leaders to pursue peaceful solutions.

As we reflect on the Hamas attack and its implications, let us hold fast to the hope that one day, God’s promise of a world without war will be fulfilled. In our prayers and actions, let us work toward a future where swords are turned into plowshares, and nations learn war no more (Isaiah 2:4).

Indeed, the events of the past week serve as a somber reminder of the ongoing conflicts and violence that persist in various regions of the world. It brings to the forefront the deep-rooted issues that continue to divide communities and nations. As United Methodists, we believe in the transformative power of prayer, and we come together in prayerful solidarity for a world where violence and war no longer hold sway.

May we as Dakotas and Minnesota United Methodists stand as a beacon of hope, compassion, and peace in a world often marked by conflict, terror, and hate. Together, in faith and unity, may we continue to pray fervently for the day when the words of the hymn “Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me” become a reality for all humanity. And may our prayers be extended through our acts of justice, service, advocacy, and education.

Alongside you on the journey,

Bishop Lanette Plambeck  
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