



PATHWAYS

# REVIEW OF CHURCH ACTIONS 2024

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# EXECUTIVE summary

## PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH USA (PCUSA)

### CRITICAL RESOLUTIONS ON ISRAEL

Since 2004, the PCUSA General Assembly has taken a critical stance against Israel, including divestment efforts and labeling Israel an apartheid state. Key resolutions at the 225th GA addressed humanitarian crises, Christian Zionism, and Israeli apartheid.

### Effective Advocacy by Pathways

Pathways launched a strong communication campaign, sharing balanced articles and working with Jewish advocacy groups. They targeted GA commissioners with educational materials and organized diverse testimonies to emphasize empathy and dialogue.

### KEY OUTCOMES

The 225th GA resulted in notable changes, including the amendment of a resolution to recognize historic Jewish Zionism and a nuanced resolution on Israeli apartheid. Pathways' efforts led to more balanced discussions and informed decision-making within the church.

## THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH (TEC)

### CRITICAL RESOLUTIONS ON ISRAEL

The Episcopal Church's General Convention voted on key resolutions focused on antisemitism and the Israel-Palestine conflict.

### Effective Advocacy by Pathways

Pathways for Peace significantly influenced the Church's stance through strategic advocacy. They provided balanced educational materials, collaborated on amendments, and ensured diverse perspectives were considered.

### KEY OUTCOMES

Pathways' efforts led to the passage of key resolutions combating antisemitism and anti-Muslim bias, while also fostering a more balanced and thoughtful discussion on the Israel-Palestine issue within the Episcopal Church.



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# Presbyterian CHURCH

*Calling Out Bad Process*

General Assembly 2024

# BACKGROUND

## Recent Actions Taken by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church USA related to Israel.

Since 2004, the General Assembly (GA) has taken increasingly hostile actions against the State of Israel, and at times, the American Jewish community. Since the late 19th century, the denomination has sponsored missions to the Arab community in the former Ottoman Empire, comprising modern-day Lebanon, Syria, and Israel. As such, it has been supportive of the Palestinian national movement, while also endorsing the formation of the State of Israel after World War II. However, in the late 20th century, actions taken by the GA increasingly expressed concerns about the lack of progress towards the creation of a Palestinian state. In 2004, efforts began to encourage divestment from businesses engaged in commerce with the State of Israel, which was believed to support the Occupation.

After a decade of debate, divestment was approved by the Presbyterian Church in 2014. This action opened the floodgates to increased focus on Israel, including a policy statement in 2016 that labeled the Occupation as the source of the conflict, and actions in 2022 that labeled Israel an apartheid state and accused it of ethnic cleansing in East Jerusalem.

Given the present war with Hamas, a rise in antisemitism and anti-Israel rhetoric of the progressive Left, the climate for anti-Israel resolutions was intense but Pathways was prepared with various strategies to tackle this year's GA.

## Resolutions of concern at the 225th GA in Salt Lake City, UT

As resolutions for the GA were made public, three were directly related to Israel and put on the agenda for the International Engagement Committee. There were a total of five resolutions before this committee: the three regarding Israel, one regarding Guatemala, and one involving Cuba.

It is important to note that the committee hearings were conducted on Zoom and were tightly controlled by the denomination's staff, which holds a bias against Israel.

# OUTCOMES:

2024

## What we accomplished

Through our efforts, we empowered our community and those in attendance to stand against inflammatory actions that serve no purpose other than to embolden extremists on both sides.

1

Pathway's efforts ensured that the Presbyterian Church didn't make the mistake of conflating Christian Zionism with historic Jewish Zionism. This allowed us to not push away our Jewish brothers and sisters- for whom Zionism is the belief in the right of the Jewish people to self-determination in their ancestral homeland.

2

We worked to facilitate a more nuanced conversation of "apartheid"- understanding our previous GA based its definition on its own creation- not those established by the UN and ICC.

3

We worked together to ensure that while we righteously advocate for the Palestinian people, we take care not to demonize, and recognize that the pathway to peace is in recognizing each other's national narratives, not eliminating them.

4

And we disseminated the testimony of those unable to be on the floor of the GA, and the stories of young students in Israel and Palestine who are on the front-lines of peacemaking and creating a shared society with GA attendees.

# Strategies: How we accomplished these outcomes



Knowing that anti-Israel activists in PCUSA would be emboldened by protests in the United States against Israel, particularly protests led by Jewish Voice for Peace, Pathways embarked on a very aggressive communication strategy. Pathways tested its messaging earlier in 2024 and discovered that members of PCUSA and other mainline denominations were hungry for balanced information regarding not only the war but the conflict in general. Furthermore, given the nuances of the conflict, fair-minded people were reluctant to make strong declarative statements one way or the other.



In late March, we began curating articles and resources on our social media accounts, networking with Jewish advocacy groups, and compiling information on the commissioners who would serve at the GA. The articles sought to highlight balanced commentary on the war and the conflict, particularly pieces that provided a strong educational component.



Beginning in May, we launched a direct communication program targeting key leaders and commissioners to the GA. These communications included videos and news sources that commissioners might find useful as they prepared for the GA. They highlighted the difficult path that a peacemaker must walk, avoiding getting sidetracked by extremists and focusing on the work of Christ. Recognizing the power of young voices in Israel and Palestine, we created a podcast with Israeli and Palestinian students who shared their views on the conflict. These students emphasized the need for empathy, compassion, and dialogue to find peace.



At the GA, we organized testimony from Jewish leaders, Presbyterian leaders, and Israelis who warned of the danger of taking provocative and inflammatory actions that serve no other purpose than to embolden extremists on both sides. This testimony was then shared with the International Engagement Committee as well as all the commissioners to the GA. Utilizing the technology of geofencing, Pathways was able to harness the power of social media and the internet to ensure that our messaging was seen on the phones and tablets of the commissioners while they were in the convention center and the hotel.



Through Pathways' targeting campaign, key members of the International Engagement Committee were identified, and relationships were cultivated.

# GEOFENCING RESULTS

For the PCUSA convention in Salt Lake City, Pathways "geofenced" the convention center and surrounding hotels with our materials. This targeted convention participants specifically- and ensured when they went on their laptops and mobile devices, they saw our ads that led to important information on what they were voting on. Whether they were using a search engine, or on their favorite app- we made sure people in that Convention Hall saw our materials both there and at their hotel rooms.

**320,524**



Targeted impressions

**712**



Direct clicks

**89**



Clicks per day

**.22%**



CTR (Click-through rate)



# REFLECTING on the actions



Overall, Pathways is pleased with the actions taken at the 226th GA. While it was not a clean sweep, when considered alongside the actions taken at the Episcopal Church General Convention, it is clear that the anti-Israel activists in both denominations cannot be happy with the results. In both national gatherings, both bodies resoundingly defeated motions that would have been used to attack Zionism. Considering how the organs of the PCUSA have been used to push this agenda, including webinars leading up to the GA featuring Jonathan Kuttub and Rev. Munther Isaac, Pathways is very pleased to have defeated the attempts to call Zionism into dispute.

On the issue of apartheid, it is clear to Pathways that many in the PCUSA are not comfortable with the definition being applied to Israel, which is something that we will begin to exploit in the future. Ultimately, Pathways successfully established its brand as the balanced, helpful resource that people are hungry for.



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# Episcopal CHURCH

*Equipping Powerful Leaders*

General Convention 2024



PATHWAYS

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“In that spirit, I rise on behalf of some of the good folks from Pathways for Peace [...]. You may have encountered them outside the convention hall. They are middle-walking, bridge-building siblings in Christ who want to honor the spirit of D056 but have anticipated anxiety about the use of the word ‘genocide.’”

- Bishop John Taylor



# BACKGROUND

## Recent Actions Taken by the General Convention of the Episcopal Church Related to Israel

The 80th General Convention in Baltimore in June 2022 was unusual due to a one-year delay and sudden changes because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Pathways' main achievement was convincing the Social Justice & International Policy committee to delay three resolutions that sought to label Israel as an apartheid state. They came to this decision in recognition of the severely limited expert testimony they'd been able to hear, as well as concerns about whether they had had enough time to discuss the language among themselves. Instead, they moved forward with a more balanced resolution. The committee also amended a resolution about the right to boycott, expanding its scope beyond Palestinian human rights, which both houses passed. Another resolution condemning Christian Zionism was referred for further review by the House of Bishops.

Knowing we would face these issues again, Pathways increased its efforts for the 81st General Convention in Louisville. We attended all relevant meetings, ensuring diverse voices from within the church and Jewish and Palestinian communities were heard.

**We would like to commend especially the work of**

our cohort of Episcopal volunteers, especially Mr. Richard Pryor, III; the Rev. Dr. Daniel Joslyn-Siemiatkoski; and the Rev. Jenny Replogle. Their work proved instrumental in tracking resolutions of concern, recruiting people to testify at committee hearings, and helping prepare two resolutions of our own.

# OUTCOMES:

2024

## What we accomplished

1

At the General Convention, Pathways successfully defeated a resolution (2022- C039) that was tabled in 2022 and brought forward in 2024 to label Israel an apartheid state. Likewise, we defeated four additional resolutions A010, A011, A012 and D003 that all sought to define Israel as an apartheid state.

2

Recognizing the power of words, Pathways mobilized deputies to defeat overtures seeking to define Palestinians as indigenous people of the land contrary to the Jewish community (D004), rejected a resolution that sought to provide support to the BDS movement (D005), and a resolution seeking to equate Christian Zionism with Zionism D006.

3

In other resolutions, Pathways and its allies, helped remove language referring to genocide and apartheid (D013, D007, D009, D056).

4

Finally, Pathways assisted deputies in authoring two resolutions of our own, one that provided new resources for Good Friday services that sought to steer clear of antisemitic and anti-Jewish readings (D 058) and the second that condemned (D 059). Both passed overwhelmingly.

# Strategies: How we accomplished these outcomes



Before Louisville, we embarked on a campaign to provide members of the Episcopal Church and mainline Protestants more broadly with materials that spoke to the nuances of the conflict through balanced information.



After testing our messaging in early 2024, we began curating articles and resources across our social media accounts.

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We networked with Jewish advocacy groups and human rights organizations to help guide the educational focus of these efforts, as well as asking for their assistance in reviewing the language of resolutions to help inform our legislative efforts.

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In early June, we began to directly communicate with deputies and bishops who would be attending the 81st General Convention, both to raise awareness of Pathways as an organization and to equip them for the work before them through resources such as our "Resolution Review."

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During the 81st General Convention in the last week of June, we continued this work of direct engagement, both at the committee level and through fostering individual relationships.

# REFLECTING on the actions



Pathways proactively wrote, amended, and/or otherwise supported efforts to address biases like antisemitism and Islamophobia within the Episcopal Church through various resolutions. Of the resolutions around Israel-Palestine, we were able to assist with compromises on the two most controversial ones that were pivotal in allowing Convention to speak without centering language of “apartheid” or “genocide.”

The passion with which these issues were discussed indicates just how important the work of peacemaking will continue to be, and thus we should further develop the relationships with deputies and bishops alike. We must stay involved in these conversations as much as possible, especially when it comes to connecting the Episcopal Church with a diversity of voices from across Jewish and Palestinian communities. We should continue curating and compiling educational resources to help equip Episcopalians to share in working towards a just and long-lasting peace. In brief, we should rejoice and be glad at what Pathways was able to accomplish in Louisville, and stay intentional about how we can continue to foster dialogue on the path to peace.



PATHWAYS



Before the house at this time is an amendment to D056, 'Calling for a Ceasefire in Gaza,' which combines several new elements. First, suggestions made—as I said yesterday—by Pathways for Peace, an organization of middle-of-the-road pragmatists on Israel and Palestine.

- Bishop John Taylor







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[vimeo.com/user220229491](https://vimeo.com/user220229491)



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