

# Resolution 4: on Confronting Christian Zionism

**Lead Sponsor:** Rev. Sari Ateek, Rector, St. John's Norwood Parish.

**Cosponsors:** The Rev. Canon John Peterson, Washington National Cathedral; the Rev. Rick Miles, Interim Rector, Grace Church, Georgetown; the Rev. David Wacaster, Rector, Good Shepherd; Delegates: Thomas Getman, St. Mark's, DC; Mary Neznok, St. Mark's, DC; John W. Harbeson, Redeemer; James Hamilton, Grace Church, Georgetown.

- 1 **RESOLVED**, that the 127th Convention of the Diocese of Washington submit the following resolution
- 2 to the 80th General Convention of The Episcopal Church:
- 3 **RESOLVED**, the House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring, that the 80th General Convention of the Episcopal
- 4 Church reject the theology of Christian Zionism as a modern misinterpretation of scripture having
- 5 no connection to the Creeds or the Prayer Book; and be it further
- 6 **RESOLVED**, that this Convention condemn the political policy positions promoted by such a theology.

## *Explanation*

Christian Zionism is the theological belief that the establishment of the modern Jewish State of Israel in 1948 is a biblically mandated precondition for the Second Coming of Christ.

It originates from a theology called dispensationalism, which was developed in the 1830s by John Nelson Darby, an ex-priest of the Church of Ireland. Through an excessively literalist reading of scripture, dispensationalism sections off the Bible into distinct, stand-alone periods (or dispensations) claiming that God has a different standard of dealings with humanity in each of these periods. The theological conclusion of dispensationalism is that God has a separate plan of salvation for the Jewish people than for the church. Also, according to Darby, the return of the Jewish people to their ancient land would trigger the events of the Second Coming of Christ.

Over the next few decades, dispensationalism grew in popularity both in England and the United States, and was the theological impetus for literalist Christians to support the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine (eventually referred to as Christian Zionism). With the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, Christian Zionism spread dramatically as many literalist Christians believed themselves to be witnessing the fulfillment of Biblical prophecy, and the first clear sign that the countdown to Armageddon had begun.

Today, this theologically flawed, literalist approach continues to support the belief that loving God must go hand-in-hand with blind support of the State of Israel without necessarily understanding the biblically unsound and very recent theological roots of Christian Zionism. In addition, it is crucial for the Episcopal Church to recognize that Christian Zionist teachings arise entirely from a Western colonial interpretation of the Bible, which corrupts God's promises in the Hebrew Scriptures, the Gospel message of justice and love, and the Baptismal Covenant. Christian Zionism is a harmful, nationalistic theology that erroneously views the Jewish people from a purely instrumental and distorted perspective of Christian eschatology. Furthermore, Christian Zionism has a very tangible negative impact on both the indigenous Palestinians, whom it sees as mere bystanders, if not obstacles to the fulfillment of God's providence, and to any attempts at a peace process since returning annexed land to the Palestinians threatens the necessary conditions for the fulfillment of prophecy. Thus, Christian Zionism has been used to support the State of Israel's continued annexation of the entire land of Palestine-Israel, and the displacement and oppression of the indigenous Palestinian people, including our Christian and Muslim brothers and sisters. Cathedral Canon John Peterson, cosponsor of this resolution, spent 12 years living in Jerusalem, as Dean of St. George's College. Canon Peterson reports, "I have witnessed first-hand the destructive impact that Christian Zionists have on the Church in Jerusalem, upon all Palestinians of whatever faith or no faith, and upon the prospects of peace in the long-suffering Holy Land."

Adoption of this resolution has no impact on the diocesan budget.