

August 14, 2009

To: Warner Brown
Bishop, CA-NV Conference, UMC
From: Doug Smith
Chair, Israel-Palestine Task Force
CA-NV Conference, UMC

Re: Israel-Palestine Task Force Meeting of July 23, 2009

I am responding to your request for a report on the Israel-Palestine Task Force Meeting of July 23, 2009.

I called this special meeting in response to divestment legislation passed at our Annual Conference in June. The agenda of the meeting was to begin implementation of the actions detailed in the divestment resolution. It was not a time for debate on issues. The decision on divestment had been made. As such, I did not invite any guests to join us.

When Len Feldman of the JCRC entered our room, I was surprised to see him, as we had not had any communication since Annual Conference – nor had I received any response to my email to him requesting that we meet in his offices to discuss effective ways for our organizations to interact as we all work towards peace with justice.

I greeted him with respect and showed him to the table of documents for the meeting. Subsequently, I invited him to introduce himself. His remarks extended well beyond what was reasonable for an introduction and became a monologue on his perception of the members of the Task Force and our misguided actions. These remarks disrupted our agenda and were making it impossible for us to proceed on our administrative responsibilities.

The committee went into executive session, asking non-members to leave for the moment. In that session, we voted to continue in executive session of members only so that we could do the work required of us in this administrative meeting.

I would be delighted to meet with Len and others from JCRC to explore ways we can effectively work together ... holding the common ground of peace with justice for Israel and Palestine, and accepting our differences with respect.

Sincerely,

Dr. Douglas Smith
Chair, Israel-Palestine Task Force
California Nevada Conference of the United Methodist Church