

PIN Bulletin For Local Organizers

*Will you strive for justice and peace among all people,
and respect the dignity of every human being?*



SPECIAL EDITION

A STATEMENT BY EPF PIN'S STEERING COMMITTEE

The Impact of General Conventions: What We Say Matters

The usual doldrums of summer have been roiled by two recent events that help us realize anew the place our Church has in the world and our part in it. The events are the Lambeth Conference and the latest of Israel's recurring assaults on people of the Gaza Strip. These two events are wholly unconnected, but they represent what can happen in the world that may demand responses from The Episcopal Church (TEC). In these cases, the path to determining whether we respond and how we respond began at the 80th General Convention that occurred shortly before the Lambeth Conference convened.

Many of us who participated in some way in GC were spending our summers reflecting, debriefing, and compiling Lessons Learned. Part of this process involves asking ourselves, why does it matter? Do the millions of people in the pews know about the resolutions that were passed, are they engaged with the legislative process of TEC, and what is the point of all those hours and hours spent preparing and engaging with GC? In other words, so what?

Then came Lambeth. Then came an attempt to reaffirm a 1998 Lambeth Conference resolution that rejected same-sex marriage through a sketchy voting process that seemed to attempt to codify it outside the light of transparency. Then came a [“firestorm of criticism”](#) especially from TEC, multiple public statements opposing the attempt, a march-demonstration by bishops, and finally changes by Conference leaders that sought to mend the rifts opened up. Through all of this, our Presiding Bishop, other bishops, and [many members](#) of TEC were able to stand apart and speak out to oppose efforts from the part of the Anglican Communion that wants less-than status for LGBTQ+ persons. They were able to do this because TEC is [on record](#) through its resolutions passed at General Conventions. This was the response to “So what?”.

Just days before Lambeth’s adjournment came Israel’s new attacks on the people of Gaza, dubbed *Operation Breaking Dawn* by Israel Defense Forces. At this writing, almost 50 Palestinians have been killed in these attacks including 15 children, and more than 350 injured, nearly one-third of them children. Although spokespersons for the U.S. and several European governments [rushed to offer support](#) for “Israel’s right to defend itself”, observers and analysts were hard-pressed to explain what prompted this round of attacks that even mainstream media described as [“pre-emptive”](#) without specific cause. [Some suggested](#) that the operation was launched to bolster Israel’s current government and secure its hold on power in the country’s current chaotic political climate.

What can be certain about Operation Breaking Dawn and the ensuing deaths and destruction are two things: weapons used in the attack were part of the billions of dollars’ worth obtained from the U.S.; and many Palestinian deaths and injuries resulted from attacks targeted at residential structures, acts that [may constitute war crimes](#). U.N. Special Rapporteur, Francesca Albanese, [said](#), “I condemn Israel's airstrikes in Gaza to allegedly 'deter' Islamic Jihad's possible retaliation for its leader's arrest. As Int'l Law only permits the use of force in self-defense, Operation Breaking Dawn is a flagrant act of aggression. Illegal. Immoral. Irresponsible.”

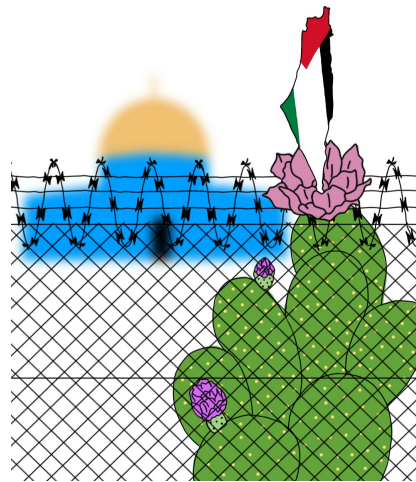
What do these events in Palestine and Israel have to do with the 80th General Convention? That convention passed resolution [D024](#) that puts in place TEC policy that “the Episcopal Church reaffirm its longstanding commitment to supporting human rights in our own countries and around the world, and to ensuring that U.S. military assistance and arms sales not be used to perpetuate conflict, violate human rights, or contribute to corruption, instability, or violence.” With Resolution D024, it could not be clearer that TEC opposes some actions occurring in Operation Breaking Dawn.

What we say matters. TEC speaks through its resolutions that are passed at General Conventions and at Executive Council between conventions. What we do also matters and what TEC can do is determined, defined, and permitted by resolutions.

Resolution D024 did not prevent Operation Breaking Dawn, nor will it stop all future wars of injustice or sale of weapons for such wars. There is a good way to go before LGBTQ+ people find welcome everywhere in the Church and before some people of the Church will be ready to welcome them. But we are called to witness, not to succeed. We are called to speak the truth, not to win. We are called to stand up, no matter who is standing on the other side against us. That is our mission as followers of Jesus.

In the early days of the AIDS epidemic when the world was keeping silent about the disease that was killing thousands of gay men, the organization ACTUP proclaimed that “SILENCE = DEATH”. That could have been true for millions of people had a handful not continued to speak, sometimes to shout, and then been joined slowly but surely by many, many more. They spoke and they acted up and eventually they prevailed.

In TEC and in the world it can influence, the words of resolutions matter, but not just the words. For in the process of preparing for GC and in the writing of resolutions, we come together. We have common cause and we work with common purpose. Despite all our many differences, we create community, we become common/union. That is holy work.



We Are Not Numbers [WANN]: Images by Young Palestinian Artists



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