



Sabeel-Kairos
Taking Action for Palestine



Carlisle Motion Passes!

**Church of England General Synod passes historic motion in solidarity with
Palestinian Christians**



On the morning of Monday 13th July the Church of England's General Synod voted in favour of a historic motion calling on the Church to "... *Respond to the call of Palestinian Christians to stand in solidarity with them and their fellow Palestinians in non-violent resistance to the ongoing occupation.*" ([GS 2451A DSM – Kairos Palestine](#))

In a lively debate which spanned Sunday evening and Monday morning the impact of six decades of the Israeli occupation on the Palestinian Church, the stories of ordinary Palestinian Christians and the restrictions on their daily lives were highlighted. This includes enduring increasing displacement, home demolitions, land confiscations, restrictions on movement, daily harassment and violence by Israeli settlers and soldiers, and imprisonment without trial or charge.

The Ven. Revd Stewart Fyfe, Archdeacon in Carlisle Diocese, who proposed the motion, opened the debate commenting that;

"This motion comes before us in a moment of utmost crisis for the Church in the land of Jesus's birth. In 1950, Christians made up 86% of the population of Bethlehem. By 2023, that was down to 8%, since when it has declined alarming. Across Israel and the Palestinian territory the Christian population, once amounting to approximately a third of the population has declined to less than 1%."

Members of Synod opposing the motion focused on the impact on the UK Jewish community, interfaith relations, and concerns around the Kairos documents being antisemitic, which was strongly refuted by speakers in favour of the motion.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Sarah Mullally, addressed Synod by saying;

"The threat to Palestinian Christians in particular – whose numbers are becoming ever smaller – is existential. Against this desperate backdrop, we are called to a new and active solidarity. We must not ignore the urgency of this moment."

Father Fadi Diab, an Anglican Priest from Ramallah who was present at Synod to

support the motion, could not speak directly in the debate. In his closing speech Stewart Fyfe read the following on his behalf;



"Today, by hearing the witness of Palestinian Christians, you have reminded us that the Body of Christ does not forget its suffering members. You have affirmed that justice is the pathway to peace. You have recognised that the Gospel calls us not to neutrality in the face of oppression, but to faithful discipleship and "faithful resistance" rooted in truth, compassion and hope.

Your decision will echo far beyond these walls. It will reach frightened children in Gaza, faithful congregations in Jerusalem, villages in the West Bank, refugee camps across our region, and countless Palestinian Christians who have wondered whether the global Church still sees them. Today you have told them: you are not forgotten. For this, we thank God, and we thank you."

The debate took place following a significant amount of pressure exerted on the Church of England from different quarters, including the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the Chief Rabbi, the Council for Christians and Jews, and the Israeli Embassy, calling on them to reject the Kairos documents as containing ***"falsehood about Israel, harming the cause of peace" and "undermining Christian Jewish dialogue"***

The Very Rev'd Canon Richard Sewell, Dean of St George's Cathedral in Jerusalem, voiced his support for the motion and wrote to general synod members before the debate saying;



"I am aware that pressure has been exerted on General Synod from various quarters both within the Church of England and from some Jewish sources too. This appears to seek to delegitimise the value and truth of these statements and predicts all kinds of harm that may result even from discussing the Carlisle Motion. I implore you not to heed such advice."

Despite all the pressure and intense lobbying before the debate, the motion passed with **an overwhelming majority in all 3 houses**, with 25 Bishops voting in favour, none against, and 5 abstaining.





A central part of our work at Sabeel-Kairos has been to support the Carlisle motion for the last 5 years since it's first inception as a deanery synod motion. We are delighted that it has finally had the hearing it deserves at a national level, and that there is a willingness in the Church of England to hear and respond to the cry of Palestinian Christians. Although there is much more work to be done, we look forward to seeing the progress towards greater solidarity and action that will come from this debate.

Special thanks go to Sabeel-Kairos member Valerie Hallard as the original author of this motion for her vision and tenacity over the last 5 years, and to the Venerable Stewart Fyfe for supporting that vision, proposing the motion in General Synod, and leading the debate with grace and compassion.

To all of you that have prayed, supported, despaired (at times!) and hoped with us, thank you.

In solidarity,
Charlotte
Director, Sabeel-Kairos UK.