



**New England Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

20 Upland Street, Worcester, MA 01607-1624
voice 508-791-1530 / fax 508-797-9295
office@nesynod.org / www.nesynod.org

BISHOP
The Rev. Margaret G. Payne

**ASSOCIATES
TO THE BISHOP**
The Rev. Theodora W. Asta
The Rev. Alice Kerr Laird

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Mr. Dexter Van Zile
CAMERA
P.O. Box 35040
Boston, MA 02135-0001
Fax: 617-787-7853

Dear Mr. Van Zile,

Here is a brief sampling of the reality that I find abhorrent and totally unacceptable regarding the actions of the Israeli Government:

1. It has no respect for and refuses to obey international law.
2. It uses the inappropriately inflated excuse of security to continue to steal Palestinian land.
3. It denies the existence of checkpoints, theft of land, abuse and daily persecution of Palestinians that I have witnessed with my own eyes.
4. The system of Israeli roads further steals Palestinian land, and by its denial of use to Palestinians, further cut them off from work, family and medical care.
5. The incursion into Gaza was disproportionate and oblivious to basic humanitarian values. Its continued limited access to outside aid is morally inexcusable.

I could go on and on.

With regard to your particular points: Bethlehem is effectively isolated by the wall in combination with other restraints – it is not “abuzz” with economic activity – it is being strangled; and Palestinians are routinely denied medical care by the existence of checkpoints and other systemic harassment.

Not only will I not offer a retraction, but I will look for every opportunity that I can find to advocate for the end of Israeli occupation. When the “facts on the ground” are truly known, and not further distorted by organizations such as yours, then I hope that there can be further dialogue about the ultimate security and freedom of both Israelis and Palestinians.

Sincerely,

The Rev. Margaret G. Payne, Bishop
New England Synod

cc Maureen Fiedler, Interfaith Voices; ELCA Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson; ELCA Synodical Bishops Bruce Burnside, Floyd Schoenhals, Gerald Mansholt, Duane Pederson, Dean Nelson, Harold Usgaard, David Zellmer, and Mr. Daniel Lehmann, The Lutheran Magazine

MGP/hm