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09.12.2004

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The American Jewish Committee and the National Council of Churches convened a high-level Christian-Jewish summit that met in Washington, D.C., for a day and half October 20-21. Twenty-one participants took part in this scheduled second meeting of a dialogue process begun earlier this year. The first meeting of the group was on May 4, 2004.

On the main agenda was a discussion on the Jewish and Christian understandings on the "Theology of Land."

"This was a continuation of the dialogue begun in May with a focus on understanding each other and building trust," said the Rev. Shanta Premawardhana, NCC Associate General Secretary for Interfaith Relations, New York City.

The meeting addressed perceptions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and how the Christian and Jewish communities in the U.S. can work together to advance peace. At the core of the discussions was a vigorous exploration of ways that key concerns of each of the communities can be presented and understood by each other, the Rev. Premawardhana said.

Among the concerns on the table was the question of divestment, which came to the forefront after the Presbyterian Church (USA) General Assembly, meeting in Richmond, Va., passed a resolution calling for a process that could lead to selective divestment in companies doing business in Israel. All participants agreed to continued consultations with each other on this matter of critical concern.

"The Christian and Jewish representatives spoke positively of their longstanding cooperation on a range of domestic policy issues and ways to strengthen their common social justice agenda," the Rev. Premawardhana reported. "As a next step, participants will explore the possibility of a trip to the Holy Land to witness and listen to, the suffering of Palestinians and Israelis alike."

He concluded that, "at the end of the meeting, participants expressed to each other a sense of accomplishment that despite the difficult issues we face, we can still come to the same table, share our differences, vigorously debate each other and still build trust and collegiality."

Participants in the Oct. 20-21 Meeting: Dr. Said Ailabouni, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; Mr. David Bernstein, American Jewish Committee; Rabbi Gary Bretton-Granatoor, Anti Defamation League; Dr. David Elcott, American Jewish Committee; Rev. C. Christopher Epting, Episcopal Church; Mr. Ethan Felson, Jewish Council for Public Affairs; Mr. Richard Foltin, American Jewish Committee; Ms. Catherine Gordon, Presbyterian Church (USA); Rev. Brian Grieves, Episcopal Church; Mr. Jess Hordes, Anti Defamation League; Dr. Darrell Jodock, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; Dr. Peter Makari, United Church of Christ/ Disciples of Christ; Mr. Mark Pelavin, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism; the Rev. Larry Pickens, United Methodist Church; Rev. Shanta Premawardhana, National Council of Churches; Rev. Jay Rock, Presbyterian Church (USA); Rabbi David Saperstein, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism; Ms. Emily Soloff, American Jewish Committee; Mr. Jacob Solomon, Greater Miami Jewish Federation; Mr. Mark Waldman, United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism; Mr. Jim Winkler, United Methodist Church.

NCC News Service, New York
