**Reflection for Monday,**

**January 29, 2024**



Deep thanks to all of you who stayed after church yesterday (or sent messages to be included in our conversation) to talk about the crisis in Israel and Palestine and how we might respond to it.

I am grateful for the close listening, the respect, and the faith that people shared. In this reflection, I will try to offer an overview of the comments.

First, we are people of faith. Prayer is primary, a fundamental power and resource that we can always employ. Our work is to seek the heart of God in works of justice and compassion. We feel grateful to be within the blessing of the United Church of Christ and its ongoing commitment and work for justice. Just as we are coming together as a community, we may also want to come together with other churches to affirm that we are on the side of peace.

We acknowledge that the conflict between Israel and Palestine is not new and is exceedingly complex. What is our responsibility as U.S. citizens and as Christians? We would like to be a beacon of justice and compassion in contrast to the all too human tendency to treat humans as “others.” Every life is precious in God’s eyes. We wish to work for a way of responding to injury or aggression that is not based in vengeance and wrath. We feel how difficult it is to figure out a life-affirming process—even to figure out at times what justice is.

Even so, we are confronted by unimaginable loss of life. We would like to do our part to make sure that every vulnerable person has access to medical care, food, water, and shelter. We are united in urgently desiring the release of hostages and a ceasefire.

This community has made a clear commitment to ongoing education and conversation about the many issues that have fed the conflict. Some of us are calling our elected officials. Some of us are connecting with non-governmental organizations. As a whole, we feel that the United Church of Christ offers reliable resources for those who want to learn more and support people in need. Here is a link to the letter which the United Church of Christ, along with other denominations, sent to congress: <https://www.ucc.org/ucc-and-disciples-join-ecumenical-community-in-letter-to-congress-on-crisis-in-israel-palestine/>

We come together to express our deep grief at the loss of life, and we would like our church to become a site of healing, a space where people can come together to grieve, lament, and seeking healing. While our next steps are not yet established, a bond of hope and solidarity has begun to form.

We ask God for discernment, courage, and compassion.

If you have ideas or comments that you would like to express, please feel free to contact me at elizabeth.orindachurch@gmail.com

In faith and hope,

Elizabeth

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It is with sadness that I let the community know of the death of Lucy Hupp Williams.

We celebrate her life and her many contributions to Orinda Community Church.

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We welcome Winter Nights as they join us this week for a four week stay, and offer our deepest thanks to Lani Shepp for her comprehensive work on all the organizing and arrangements.