The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) is following in the footsteps of Martin Luther, as it considers joining the ranks of other denominations taking sides against Israel in the Middle East conflict. At a recent gathering of its assembly, the Lutheran Church stated that it was against complete divestment from Israel, but would consider boycotting Israeli goods produced in the territories captured during the Six Day War. Denominations across the world are increasingly becoming embroiled in the Middle East conflict, including the Church of England and Church of Scotland, the Catholic Church and now Evangelical Churches in the US. Lutheran Bishop Rev. Munib A. Younan addressed the conference, criticizing Israel for its 40 year occupation of the territories and its attempt to save lives by the construction of the West Bank peace wall. He also blamed Israel for the reduction of the Christian population in the Holy Land, rather than a Palestinian population that seems increasingly intolerant of Christians living in "Muslim land".

Quote: *"Younan told the assembly that the separation wall, located in the West Bank, is "not a sign of justice and peace." The wall "does not provide security, it breeds despair and a culture of separation." Younan said he has "no doubt that the separation wall in the Holy Land will one day fall." Many people have asked what they can do to help, said Younan. People can help through education,* ***prophetic interfaith dialogue*** *and continuity of Christianity in the Holy Land. "Christians are leaving because of the unstable political situation, the harsh restrictions of the occupation and the loss of hope in a just peace. We are now less than 2 percent of the population." Younan said 2007 marks 40 years of occupation. "Forty years of wilderness is enough for both Palestinians and Israelis, indeed for the whole world." The Lutheran church "calls (for) the Palestinian state (to) be a modern, democratic, secular, civil society and live in peace with justice alongside Israel, so that both nations will become a light to the world."*

The Lutheran Church's call for the boycott of Israeli goods brought condemnation from the Simon Wiesenthal Centre, an organization that works to oppose anti-Semitism worldwide. Rabbi Abraham Cooper blasted the Lutheran Church for its hypocrisy in laying the blame for the conflict in the Middle East solely at Israel's feet, while turning two blind eyes towards Palestinian terrorism and the plight of Israeli civilians and Christians living in the territories.

Quote: *"The Simon Wiesenthal Center blasted the assembly's "mixed message" of rejecting divestiture but "studying" a boycott. "This marks the first time a mainline American Protestant church has moved toward a possible boycott of Israel," said the centre's associate dean, Rabbi Abraham Cooper. "ELCA delegates would have made a stronger contribution to the quest for peace and justice in the Holy Land had they also raised the ransacking of Christian places of worship and [the] recent forced conversion of a Christian professor in Gaza, as well as the unrelenting targeting of Israeli civilian communities by Palestinian Kassam rockets," Cooper said.*

By the way, what on earth does "prophetic interfaith dialogue" mean? If "interfaith dialogue" is ecumenicalism by another name, and entails Muslims, Jews and Christians coming together as one, then what is "prophetic" interfaith dialogue? Is it possible that the Lutheran Church, in order to ease tensions between the "three monotheistic faiths", is seeking to unify our beliefs on the end times? Muslims believe that their Mahdi will conquer Jerusalem and rule over it for a period of seven years. Christians believe this man will be none other than the Antichrist or False Prophet, whom the Lord will destroy at His Second Coming. These opposing views, in the eyes of the world, will ultimately bring about a full scale war of civilizations. Sadly more and more Christian organizations are rejecting the correct interpretation of Scriptures, and adhering to the anti-Semitic teachings of Replacement Theology and Preterism. As a result they cannot see the imminent fulfilment of end time events, such as the appearance of the Antichrist and the division of God's land. This, I believe, will lead to apostate churches accepting the Antichrist as their Messiah during the tribulation period, when he finally brings "peace" to the Middle East.

Source Worldwide Faith News , JTA