

Session Five: A Church Confession

Group One

Select someone to read this portion of “A Church Confession” from the Kairos USA document. Then together look over the information in your packet. This information is intended to give you more context for WHY this “sin” is being confessed in this document. Review this information, and then discuss the questions listed below. Choose someone to take notes and report back to the large group.

“We have failed to challenge our government’s policies. Rather than acting as an honest broker in negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians, our government has consistently supported, both financially and diplomatically, the actions of Israel that have brought suffering to Palestinians, continuing insecurity to Israelis and the declining prospect of a just peace.” ~ Kairos USA

(review handouts with information)

Discussion questions:

“Structural sin” is defined as the collective behavior of groups, institutions, churches, and nation states, that cause harm in direct and indirect ways, including: 1) intentionally causing harm; 2) seeking to exploit harm for benefit; 3) inactions by people who are in a position to avoid, eliminate or limit harm but fail to do so out of laziness, fear, indifference or a sense of it being “too complicated” or “impossible” to make real change; 4) actions or inactions caused by people who are ignorant of the larger impact of the systems in which they participate. What aspects of “sin” are taking place here?

In what ways might we be involved in this “sin,” whether indirectly or directly, as individuals, as a church, or as a country?

Can you think of other examples we've observed personally, heard about in the news, or have discussed elsewhere in our study together?

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“As individuals and as church institutions, we have supported a system of control, inequality and oppression through misreading of our Holy Scriptures, flawed theology and distortions of history. We have allowed to go unchallenged theological and political ideas that have made us complicit in the oppression of the Palestinian people. Instead of speaking and acting boldly, we have chosen to offer careful statements designed to avoid controversy and leave cherished relationships undisturbed.” ~Kairos USA

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Group Three

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"We have accepted the narrative of a vulnerable State of Israel beset by powerful, implacable enemies, thereby excusing the state's actions that violate international law, isolate Israel in the community of nations and virtually eliminate the possibility of a sustainable peace." ~ Kairos USA

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“We have forgotten the difference between a theology that supports the policies and institutional structures of oppression and a theology that, in response to history and human affairs, stands boldly with the widow, the orphan, the poor and the dispossessed. In our churches, political activities and personal interactions we have adopted the use of words that uphold rather than challenge injustice. We have accepted a notion of justice that is defined by the powerful and is equated with “security” and “law and order.” Declaring ourselves committed to nonviolence, we have condemned the resistance of the oppressed while legitimizing the use of overwhelming force by the powerful. We have called for reconciliation in the form of dialogue and mutual understanding while overseeing the continuation and advancement of the oppressive conditions that breed continued conflict and violence.” ~ Kairos USA

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“We have acceded to the reality of a powerful political lobby and an array of advocacy organizations, Jewish and Christian, committed to silencing or suppressing conversation about and inquiry into the human rights practices of the State of Israel while blocking legitimate direct action to bring pressure on Israel.” ~ Kairos USA

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“We have invested in corporations that help carry out and profit from the occupation of Palestinian lands.” ~ Kairos USA

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