

## Summary of 2017 Board actions re HP boycott

Some congregants have requested an explanation of the UUSS Board's decisions regarding the use of Hewlett-Packard products and supplies. At the January 2017 Board of Trustees meeting, guests Cathy Hackett and Patricia Daugherty of UJME (UUs for Justice for the Middle East) requested a boycott of Hewlett-Packard (HP) products to protest their involvement and complicity in human rights offenses, particularly with regard to the sale of biometric technology to aid Israel's military occupation of Palestinian territories and discriminatory separation of Palestinians from their jobs, farmland, health care, and families within Palestine. HP also contracts with Israeli settlements in Palestine, which are illegal under international law.

UJME did not ask us to discard HP products in use, but to not purchase any new HP products or supplies. UJME had a written pledge that they wanted the Board to approve for the Congregation. The Board wanted to ensure that the Congregation had a chance to be educated and to express opinions before taking permanent action. Board members passed a motion that UUSS declare a 3-month moratorium on the purchase of HP products, during which time UJME would provide tabling and opportunities for dialogue with members of the Congregation.

During the following three months, UJME tabled six times after church to inform congregants and 85 members signed a commitment not to use HP products personally. An open Forum on "HP Free Church" was held to continue the conversation with members. Since the original meeting with the Board, UJME pointed out HP's complicity in the US government's accelerated and massive deportation of undocumented immigrants. HP also provides for the biometric tracking of persons held in US prisons; mass incarceration in the United States has been documented as the result of an unjust and discriminatory justice system (see Michelle Alexander's book *The New Jim Crow*).

At the May 2017 Board meeting there was follow-up discussion, with Cathy Hackett, Kim Stoddard and Patricia Daugherty present. The Board approved a motion "To make permanent the boycott of HP products at UUSS." This was an administrative decision, limited in scope, that UUSS funds would not be used to purchase HP products for use by church staff. The Board did not see this as making a congregational pledge, and hence did not see a need to bring this before the Congregation for a vote. In the same vein, the Board took this action only with regard to HP because of the case made by UJME and the efforts the group made to inform congregants about HP's actions. It was not the Board's intent to align the congregation with the Global Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement, and this continues to be the case.

As the Board's charge is the making of policy and oversight of UUSS facilities, personnel, finances and long-range planning, it is not the Board's aim to attempt to engage with the many complexities of Israel/Palestine. At the same time, the Trustees share the hope for peace, dignity, and safety for both Israel and Palestine. We thank all UUSS committees and groups working for justice and healing in the world.