

Report on the Episcopalian General Assembly

Rabbi Alvin Berkun

The NCS was officially invited to be an Observer at the General Convention of the Episcopal Church held every three years, this year in Indianapolis. Rabbi Gil Rosenthal was to represent NCS. However, since "one cannot dance at two weddings", and having been invited to address the Presbyterian General Assembly at the same time, he asked Rabbi Alvin Berkun, immediate past chair, to represent the NCS in Indianapolis.

Coming from testifying at the Presbyterian meeting in Pittsburgh, where he testified against the Presbyterians' voting for disinvestment in companies doing business with Israel's military as well as attempting to declare Israel an apartheid state, Rabbi Berkun indicated that the mood among the Episcopalians was totally different.

Firstly, Rabbi Berkun personally thanked Presiding Bishop Jeffries for setting a leadership tone several weeks earlier by issuing a pastoral letter indicating her opposition to divestment, and indicating her being in favor of investment on both sides of the Jordan. Additionally, a red carpet was rolled out for the invited guests of all faiths. An orientation luncheon, a special gallery on the floor, a festive dinner with appropriate introductions by the Presiding Bishop, front row seats and acknowledgement at the opening prayer service, set a tone which extended to numerous individual delegates who greeted us in the corridors with words of welcome.

Rabbi Berkun met with some of the pro Israel Christian spokespeople as well as with Palestinians. The divestment issue was virtually non-existent.

He pointed out the proper tone set from the top which helped the Episcopal Church deal with controversial issues in a positive way.