



March 16, 2007 Your Community and Washington, D.C.

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

We invite you to join thousands in a “Christian Peace Witness for Iraq.” As followers of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, our faith compels us to make our voice heard—to repent of our complicity with the invasion and occupation of Iraq and to renew our commitment to peacemaking. We ask you to join us in praying for peace, studying the scriptures, learning nonviolence, lighting candles of hope, and gathering together for an ecumenical public witness on March 16, 2007, the fourth anniversary of the war in Iraq. We stand in solidarity with sisters and brothers in other faith traditions and ask their prayers and support for our witness.

Just as Jesus wept over Jerusalem because it did not know the things that make for peace, we weep over Washington, D.C., because of the tremendous human suffering and loss of life that have resulted from our government’s policies toward Iraq. We are convinced that peace in Iraq cannot be won militarily. It is time to bring the troops home and to support a comprehensive peace process there.

We believe, with Martin Luther King, Jr., that “the ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it. . . . Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. . . . The chain reaction of evil—hate begetting

hate, wars producing more wars—must be broken, or we shall be plunged into the dark abyss of annihilation.”

Peace Witness Focus

- 1. End the U.S. Occupation.** Like Isaiah, we are called to raise our prophetic voice, saying that security cannot be achieved through military domination of one people over another. We call on one another to find genuine security in God, who insists that we build just relationships with all people. We call on the President and Congress to bring our troops home from Iraq, to remove our military bases and to stop threatening Iran and other nations.
- 2. Support Our Troops.** Like Jesus, who healed the sick and preached good news to the poor, we are called to be a pastoral presence to our country. We call on one another to care for soldiers and their families who give so much of themselves in times of conflict. We call on the President and Congress to provide generous support for veterans and active-duty soldiers and their families as they seek to rebuild their lives.
- 3. Rebuild Iraq.** Like Paul, we are called to love our neighbors as ourselves and to care even for our enemies. The lives of our sisters and brothers in Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, and across the Middle East have been

turned upside down by the war. We call on one another to financially support relief efforts in Iraq through our denominations. We call on the President and Congress to lead the way in funding international reconstruction of Iraq and providing humanitarian aid for shattered Iraqi families, for our experience in other conflicts has taught us that such assistance is the most effective path to real security for all people around the world.

4. Say NO to Torture. Like the disciple who learned to put away the sword, we are called to treat others as we want to be treated. We call on one another to learn and practice the discipline of active nonviolence: to resist violence and injustice and to construct the culture of peace and reconciliation that we all desire. We insist that our government treat all enemy combatants humanely and take decisive action to ensure that torture is banned by all agencies of the United States government.

5. Say YES to Justice. Like Mary, who praised God for lifting up the lowly and filling the hungry with good things, we long for a world free from hunger, homelessness, environmental destruction, injustice, and oppression. We call on one another to do justice and show mercy to make our vision plain. We call on the President and Congress to create a federal budget that puts priority on meeting basic human needs instead of on making war. Let us together begin to fashion a just peace dividend that is both renewable and lasting.

Preparation

We invite you to join in a Christian witness against the war in Iraq, taking at least one of these forms:

- praying daily for the end of the war and occupation
- studying the Bible and its implications for U.S. foreign policy
- learning about and practicing active nonviolence
- fasting toward grounding our security in God
- forming groups for prayer, study and action
- inviting your neighbors to join in public witness against the war
- lighting candles in the windows of your home and house of worship
- participating in a weekly peace witness in your town center

Public Witness, March 16, 2007

These preparations will culminate in public Christian witnesses for peace on March 16 in Washington, D.C. and elsewhere. We will share in an evening ecumenical

worship service at the Washington National Cathedral, a candlelight procession to the White House, and a late-night peace vigil, during which some participants may engage in “divine obedience” (civil disobedience) and risk possible arrest. We invite you to come to Washington, D.C. or to join similar public witness events in your community. We will provide resources for this invitation on our website christianpeacewitness.org. We invite you to register your participation on the website.

We believe that until the Christian community is willing to take risks for peace, to put its words into action, to publicly witness that the war in Iraq is wrong, more people will die, more violence will shatter more lives, and we will all be less secure. Let us commit to the fullness of the Gospel vision of justice, peace, inclusive community and wholeness. Let us choose life that we and our children and the people of Iraq may live!

Scriptural references: Luke 19:41-42, Isaiah 31, Luke 7:22, Galatians 5:13-15; Romans 12:19-21, Matthew 26:51-52, Matthew 7:12, Deuteronomy 30:19, Luke 1:46-55, Micah 6:8

Partners

Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America • Catholic Peace Fellowship • Christian Alliance for Progress • Disciples Peace Fellowship • Episcopal Peace Fellowship • Every Church a Peace Church • Kairos: A Time to Speak • A Time to Act • Kirkridge Retreat & Study Center • Leadership Conference of Women Religious • Lutheran Peace Fellowship • Methodist Federation for Social Action • Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns • Mennonite Church USA Peace and Justice Support Network • No2Torture • Peace e Bene Nonviolence Service • Pax Christi USA • Pentecostal Charismatic Peace Fellowship • Presbyterian Peace Fellowship • Sojourners/Call to Renewal.

Local contact: