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CALL FOR PEACE

March 3, 2003

Nothing could be clearer than that the Gospel of Christ is a Gospel of Peace. As disciples of Christ, we abhor violence and war. Jesus rejects the violent response to evil. As Christians, we believe that all people are created in God's image and that we are called to love all others as sisters and brothers. The love of our neighbor obligates us to act to prevent wars and seek alternatives to them.

We stand, therefore, in opposition to unilateral action by any country. Specifically, we continue to question the moral legitimacy of any preemptive, unilateral use of military force to overthrow the government of Iraq. Furthermore, we feel it would be detrimental to U.S. interests to take unilateral military action against Iraq when there is already strong international support for weapons inspections, and it is apparent that most other world governments oppose military action.

To be silent in the face of such a prospect is not an option for followers of Christ. We also fear that war with Iraq won't make us safer, but rather inflame anti-U.S. sentiments and may even stimulate more attacks by extremists. Finally, the very notion that one nation may attack another because of what it might do is philosophically, ethically, and pragmatically perilous. After all, an enemy may return the favor. Once 'pre-emption' is established as a valid principle for international relations, nations which invoke the principle will have no conceptual shelter.

We have no illusions about the behavior or intentions of the Iraqi government. The Iraqi leadership must cease its internal repression, end its threats to its neighbors, stop any support for terrorism, abandon its efforts to develop weapons of mass destruction, and destroy all such existing weapons. Still, we urge all leaders to step back from the brink of war and to continue to work through the United Nations to contain, deter and disarm Iraq. We call on the United States and the U.N. to follow diplomatic paths predicated on mercy, honesty, and justice and to seek peacefully negotiated resolutions to the impasse in Iraq. We call on the United States to allow the weapons inspectors to run their appropriate course without undue pressure or threats of pre-emptive, unilateral action against Saddam Hussein and Iraq.

Finally, but perhaps most importantly, exercising our religious conscience and vocation as followers of Christ, we call on all Vermonters to pray. Pray for President George W. Bush and our country. Pray for all world leaders on all sides of this conflict that they work ever more diligently in the pursuit of peaceful solutions. Pray for the members of our armed forces, for the burdens they carry, for the pain of separation from their anxious loved ones, and for the danger to their very lives; that they may return home safely.

We are a diverse network of Christians in Vermont working together to serve the common good through public worship and prayer; acts of mercy and care; and loving prophetic witness for peace, justice and the integrity of creation.



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- Episcopal Bishops
- United Methodist Bishops
- United Church of Christ
- "For Peace in God's World" Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Anglican Consultative Council
- U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Bishop Mark S. Hanson
- United Methodist Church Bishops
- American Friends Service Committee
- Orthodox Peace Fellowship
- U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops
- Orthodox Peace Fellowship
- Presbyterian Church USA
- American Baptist Churches USA "Intercession in the Prospect of War With Iraq"; Bishop Thomas Ely, Episcopal Diocese of Vermont; Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Boston
(Sources for "Vermont Christians Call for Peace" Vermont Ecumenical Council and Bible Society statement)

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