

## THE PASTORAL LETTER ON THE IRAQ WAR

### Here's how you can help:

1. **On Sunday, Sept. 16, 2007**, read the *Pastoral Letter on the Iraq War* at your church and distribute this bulletin insert widely, in commemoration of the International Day of Peace, observed annually on Sept. 21, as designated by the United Nations.
2. **“Join protest to prayer”** by lifting your voices, along with those across the United Church of Christ, for an end to the war in Iraq. Promote the *Pastoral Letter on the Iraq War* in your church and community.
3. **By the first Sunday in October, sign the online petition** at [http://ga3.org/campaign/iraq\\_petition](http://ga3.org/campaign/iraq_petition) and help us reach a goal of adding 100,000 signatures before World Communion Sunday. (Handwritten signatures should include name, city/state and church name -- and an e-mail address if available – and be mailed to Pastoral Letter Endorsers, Justice and Witness Ministries, United Church of Christ, 700 Prospect Ave., Cleveland, OH 44115-1100.)
4. **Encourage others** to read and lend their endorsement to the *Pastoral Letter on the Iraq War* by offering their names online at [http://ga3.org/campaign/iraq\\_petition](http://ga3.org/campaign/iraq_petition).
4. **Pray for leaders of United Church of Christ** as they travel to Washington, D.C., in the week following World Communion Sunday to present the *Pastoral Letter on the Iraq War* and the list of endorsing UCC signatures to the leadership of Congress and members of the Administration.

God is still speaking, Spread the word.



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August 2007

### Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

At the 26th General Synod in Hartford, Conn., the Collegium of Officers issued a *Pastoral Letter on the Iraq War* endorsed by all of the Conference Ministers and the Presidents of the Seminaries of the United Church of Christ. The *Pastoral Letter* calls on the church to “join protest to prayer” in an effort to end the war.

Since Synod, several thousand members have added their signatures to the *Pastoral Letter* as an expression of our shared commitment to seek a new path toward a just and secure world.

We ask that this *Pastoral Letter* be read or distributed in our churches on Sunday, September 16, preceding the International Day of Peace on September 21.

By World Communion Sunday, October 6, we hope to have gathered 100,000 signatures of United Church of Christ members to the *Pastoral Letter*.

In the weeks following World Communion Sunday, leaders of the United Church of Christ will present the *Pastoral Letter* with the signatures to the leadership of Congress and members of the Administration in Washington.

On the back page you will find information on how to sign the letter either through the United Church of Christ website or by mail. We need your signature and the signatures of your fellow church members in order to have an impact on key decision makers at this critical time.

In Christ,

The Collegium of Officers of the United Church of Christ



**A Pastoral Letter on the Iraq War  
from the Collegium of Officers  
United Church of Christ**

June 22, 2007

The war in Iraq is now in its fifth year. Justified as a means to end oppression, this war has imposed the new oppression of terror on the people of Iraq. Justified as the only way to protect the world from weapons of mass destruction, this war has led to the massive destruction of communal life in Iraq. Justified as a means to end the rule of terror, this war has bred more terror. Every day we look for justice, but all we see is bloodshed. Every day we yearn for righteousness, but all we hear is a cry.

Thousands of precious American lives have been lost; thousands more have been altered forever by profound injuries. We grieve each loss and embrace bereaved families with our prayers and compassion. Tens of thousands more innocent Iraqi lives are daily being offered on the altar of preemptive war and sectarian violence. They, too, are precious, and we weep for them. In our name human rights have been violated, abuse and torture sanctioned, civil liberties dismantled, Iraqi infrastructure and lives destroyed. Billions of dollars have been diverted from education, health care, and the needs of the poor in this land and around the world. Efforts to restrain the real sources of global terrorism have been ignored or subverted. Trust and respect for the United States throughout the world has been traded for self-serving political gain. Every day we look for justice, but all we see is bloodshed. Every day we yearn for righteousness, but all we hear is a cry.

We confess that too often the church has been little more than a silent witness to evil deeds. We have prayed without protest. We have recoiled from the horror this war has unleashed without resisting the arrogance and folly at its heart. We have been more afraid of conflict in our churches than outraged over the deceptions that have killed thousands. We have confused patriotism with self-interest. As citizens of this land we have been made complicit in the bloodshed and the cries. Lord, have mercy upon us.

In the midst of our lament we give thanks – for pastors and laity who have raised courageous voices against the violence and the deceit, for military personnel who have served with honor and integrity, for chaplains who have cared for soldiers and their families with compassion and courage, for veterans whose experience has led them to say, “no more,” for humanitarian

Today we call for an end to this war, an end to our reliance on violence as the first, rather than the last resort, an end to the arrogant unilateralism of preemptive war. Today we call for the humility and courage to acknowledge failure and error, to accept the futility of our current path, and we cry out for the creativity to seek new paths of peacemaking in the Middle East, through regional engagement and true multinational policing. Today we call for acknowledgment of our responsibility for the destruction caused by sanctions and war, thereby, we pray, beginning to rebuild trust in the Middle East and around the world. Today we call for repentance in our nation and for the recognition in our churches that security is found in submitting to Christ, not by dominating others.

To this end may we join protest to prayer, support ministries of compassion for victims here and in the Middle East, cast off the fear that has made us accept the way of violence and return again to the way of Jesus. Thus may bloodshed end and cries be transformed to the harmonies of justice and the melodies of peace. For this we yearn, for this we pray, and toward this end we rededicate ourselves as children of a loving God who gives “light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

John H. Thomas  
Edith A. Guffey  
Linda Jaramillo  
José A. Malayang  
Cally Rogers-Witte

*Endorsed by all the Conference Ministers of the United Church of Christ and  
by the Presidents of the Seminaries of the United Church of Christ*

*“God expected justice, but saw bloodshed; righteousness,  
but heard a cry.” — Isaiah 5.7*