

## Worship and Action Update 10/18/02

Dear Friends in New York Yearly Meeting:

We too are America and so share responsibility for the things our nation says and does. When Congress votes for war, we feel complicit. When an urge for violence grips our nation by the throat, we feel fearful and oppressed. When the needs of the most vulnerable are derided and discarded, we feel demeaned. When lives are extinguished, we feel loss.

But if we too are America, we can elect for our country to live in the Spirit of peace. To those who press for war, we can bear witness to the Light. To governors who preach paranoia, we can speak out of tenderness. We can remind ourselves and our neighbors that God did not intend for us to live in the darkness of distrust and disrespect. And in worship we can help sustain each other in our journey of activism:

All the various expressions of the peace testimony find their inspiration in the conviction that the spirit of God dwells in each person, and that the calling of Friends is to listen and speak to that of God in others, thereby strengthening that of God within themselves. There are, of course, conflicts and disputes, and we all must struggle with evil. But in such struggles, Friends' only weapons are love, gentleness, faith, patience, purity, grace, virtue, temperance, self-denial, meekness and innocence.

(From the Brief Amicus Curiae of New York Yearly Meeting in *Packard v. United States of America*, at page 11. The brief is available on the Peace Action page of the NYYM Web site at [www.nyym.org](http://www.nyym.org).)

Today, America has edged closer to war, but we have not moved as near the precipice as seemed inevitable in late July when New York Yearly Meeting resolved to "hear anew the call to pray and work for peace." Public expression against war has emerged and is swelling. The United Nations has found its voice and is calling for reason and diplomacy. And many American political leaders are beginning to discover their inner strength to stand for peace.

Let us acknowledge and express appreciation to those in Congress who heard and responded to the voices of reason, diplomacy, peace, and love. Those from Connecticut, New Jersey, and New York who voted No to the resolution authorizing military action were: Senator Jon Corzine and Representatives Rosa DeLauro, Rick Larson, James Maloney, Rush Holt, Bob Menendez, Frank Pallone Jr., Donald Payne, Maurice Hinchey, Amo Houghton, John LaFalce, Gregory Meeks, Jerrold Nadler, Major Owens, Charles Rangel, Jose Serrano, Louise Slaughter, Edolphus Towns, Nydia Velazquez.

The work and worship of bearing witness for peace has not ended.

We are urged to contact representatives to the United Nations, particularly the permanent

members of the Security Council, to express support for inspections and peaceful alternatives and an end to sanctions. The Web site of Voices in the Wilderness ([www.vitw.org](http://www.vitw.org)), among others, offers fax numbers and e-mail addresses for contacting important members of the Security Council.

Many will travel to Washington, D.C., on Saturday, October 26th, for a National March to Stop the War against Iraq. Friends throughout NYYM are organizing transportation. As well, information on buses leaving from numerous locations in Connecticut, New Jersey, and New York is available from the Web site of The International A.N.S.W.E.R. Coalition at <http://internationalanswer.org/campaigns/o26/>.

Regional Meetings, monthly meetings, and individual Friends continue to take action to express our peace testimony in these tumultuous times. As always, information you supply can be posted on the Peace Action page of NYYM's Web site ([www.nyyym.org/qr/nyympa](http://www.nyyym.org/qr/nyympa)).

In continuing care,

*Linda Chidsey, Vicki Cooley, Fred Dettmer NYYM Worship & Action working group*

FROM A SPEECH DELIVERED BY ANGLICAN BISHOP PETER PRICE AT AN ANTIWAR RALLY IN LONDON ON SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2002:

I am frightened we are hurtling towards a war that will have unseen and unforeseeable consequences. For we will not only fight a wicked regime but enter a war that could devastate and destroy our friends. My mind goes back to a visit to Iraq in 1999. I was invited with others, including the Bishop of Coventry, to a lunch with a Christian family. At his table our host welcomed us, our Iraqi minders, secret police, and drivers. He took a large unleavened bread and broke it, sharing it with us and saying in Arabic: "Under God, we are all one, as we share this bread."

Before the meal ended he beckoned me for a quiet word in his garden, telling me in a few hastily grabbed moments what life was like. It was not good: His action that lunchtime put him and his family in danger. "I am making this garden for peace," he said. "It is on the site of a bomb crater. Come and sit down with me under this fig tree."

In that moment I reflected on the vision of the prophet Micah. "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, or ever again be trained to make war. But each one will sit down under his own vine and fig tree with no one to trouble him." Today I wonder what will happen to such people, to one who practices "loving his enemy" if war comes.

\* \* \*

We must be guided by the vision of a world in which nations stop seeking to resolve their

problems by making war. Within the traditions of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity there is teaching that obliges governments and citizens to work for the avoidance of war.

Today we are demonstrating for peace. But are we peace lovers, or peacemakers? We must not only demand of governments that they work for peace, but that we as citizens so change our attitudes that peacemaking becomes as natural as breathing. Demonstrations rarely change things immediately. What changes things is when people find in their heart a new resolve, a new courage to shape the world differently. War may come. The question is what will we do then? Do we simply shrug our shoulders and walk away, saying "We demonstrated in Hyde Park, but it failed?"

As a Christian, I follow Jesus of Nazareth who said, "Blessed are the peace makers"; not peace lovers. We all love the idea of peace. Today we are demonstrating for a new kind of world, but it will not come unless we work for it. We cannot be peacemakers only when war threatens.

True peacemaking is demanding. It demands new attitudes from governments and citizens; it demands we open our eyes to see all humanity as one and equal; it demands we recognize that a bomb dropped on an Iraqi, Palestinian, or Jew is as a bomb dropped on any of us; peacemaking demands no more unilateral actions by powerful nations; peacemaking demands the dismantling of all weapons of mass destruction.

\* \* \*

Today we give a simple message. Stop the war. Contain and disarm Saddam. But building world peace does not happen with slogans or rallies, but through citizens and governments that: Pray peace; think peace; speak peace; and act peace.

Jesus of Nazareth was the greatest peace activist of all, and he said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God."