

## Worship & Action Update, 10/24/02

Dear Friends:

How is truth prospering among us?

Part of our answer: We have new understanding and the beginnings of new relationships, gained by communicating with our neighbors and with other faith groups in our communities and with those who would like to represent us in government. Rich possibilities for deepening and strengthening peaceable living and peaceable communities open before us.

One focus for the next several weeks is the importance of participating in public affairs at home as election day approaches. Questions and communications at candidates' town meetings or in other community settings have traction, make a difference to candidates for Congress and their staff members. That is what Tim Barner of the FCNL told Friends in western New York this week. At a community meetings a one-sentence statement of fact followed by a question is highly effective. At the close of this message are six questions from the October 17 FCNL Legislative Action Message (available at [www.fcnl.org](http://www.fcnl.org) under What's New).

The call to sustained practice of shared worship and action for peace draws us forward.

"Shared worship" brings surprises, new information, and new relationships, too. Some of us worship daily at a time others have committed to keep, across distances or in person, connecting with other Friends or joining in observances of other faith traditions. September 11th fell this year in the week of the Jewish High Holy Days, days for asking forgiveness and seeking to mend the world. Now we approach Ramadan, the month in which Muslims fast during the daytime as a practice in self-restraint and right relationship with God. We have received a letter explaining the intention of a Christian Friend to observe Ramadan that Friends may wish to read and share as led; it is posted with a link to the Yearly Meeting Peace Activity page <http://www.nyym.org/qr/nyympa/ramadan-ch.html>.

Truth prospers among us as we love one another. We are learning.

Peaceable greetings,

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

FROM THE OCTOBER 17 FCNL LEGISLATIVE ACTION MESSAGE (AVAILABLE AT [WWW.FCNL.ORG](http://WWW.FCNL.ORG) UNDER WHAT'S NEW):

BACKGROUND: An effective way to use your question opportunity is to begin with a short, one-sentence introduction to the topic. Follow this with a specific, to-the-point question.

Whenever possible, frame your question so as to require a yes or no answer or an equally specific response. Following are some sample introductions and statements that you might use to focus candidates on the dangerous consequences of a war against Iraq.

1. INTRODUCTION: The CIA, some military generals, and former National Security Council advisors have said, on the record, that Iraq does not pose an imminent threat to the U.S.

QUESTION: Do you believe it is right to mount a preemptive strike on a country that does not pose an imminent threat?

2. INTRODUCTION: Although most of the international community believes that non-military alternatives, including renewed UN weapons inspections and diplomacy, can be effective in dealing with Saddam Hussein, these approaches are not being pursued with the same energy and resources as preparation for war.

QUESTION: Do you support the use of non-military alternatives? If not, why not?

3. INTRODUCTION: Now that Congress has granted Pres. Bush the authority to act unilaterally, he has promised a full multilateral effort; polls indicate that a large majority of people in the U.S. support this approach.

QUESTION: Would you seek to hold the President to his promise of working multilaterally? How would you do so?

4. INTRODUCTION: It is widely acknowledged that a preemptive, unilateral U.S. military strike against Iraq would likely inflame anti-American sentiment abroad, destabilize the Middle East region, and increase terrorist attacks at home and abroad.

QUESTION: Do you think these risks have been sufficiently addressed?

5. INTRODUCTION: The CIA has said that a U.S. attack would likely provoke Saddam Hussein to use any weapons of mass destruction that he has.

QUESTION: Do you believe that it is right to put U.S. troops, Iraqi civilians, and our friends and allies in the Middle East region in such danger?

6. INTRODUCTION: No clear plan for restabilizing Iraq after a war has been developed, and U.S. invasion and long-term occupation could cost hundreds of billions of U.S. dollars.

QUESTION: Do you believe that this is the best way to spend limited resources when there are grave and immediate human needs issues such as the economy, education, health care, crime and the environment, both at home and abroad?

FROM THE WORDS OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DELIVERED AT RIVERSIDE CHURCH, NEW YORK

CITY, APRIL 4, 1967:

. . . We are called to speak for the weak, for the voiceless, for the victims of our nation, for those it calls "enemy," for no document from human hands can make these humans any less our brothers. I think of them, too, because it is clear to me that there will be no meaningful solution until some attempt is made to know them and hear their broken cries.

. . .

A true revolution of values will lay hand on the world order and say of war, "This way of settling differences is not just."

A nation that continues year and year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.

America, the richest and most powerful nation in the world, can well lead the way in this revolution of values. There is nothing except a tragic death wish to prevent us from reordering our priorities over the pursuit of war.

This call for a worldwide fellowship that lifts neighborly concern beyond one's tribe, race, class, and nation is in reality a call for an all-embracing and unconditional love for all mankind. We can no longer afford to worship the God of hate or bow before the altar of retaliation. The oceans of history are made turbulent by the ever-rising tides of hate. History is cluttered with the wreckage of nations and individuals that pursued this self-defeating path of hate.

We still have a choice today: nonviolent coexistence or violent coannihilation. We must move past indecision to action. If we do not act, we shall surely be dragged down the long, dark, and shameful corridors of time reserved for those who possess power without compassion, might without morality, and strength without sight.

Now let us begin. Now let us rededicate ourselves in the long and bitter, but beautiful struggle for a new world. If we will but make the right choice, we will be able to speed up the day, all over America and all over the world, when justice will roll down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream.

May our country, on the brink of war, take to heart the final refrain of "America, the Beautiful":

America! America!  
God mend thine ev'ry flaw,  
Confirm thy soul in self-control,  
Thy liberty in law.