

# The Crisis in Iraq and the Response of the Churches



photo by Bob Haynes, Basra, 2002

*Many citizens are confused or uncertain about what United States policy should be regarding Iraq.*

*This booklet is designed to serve as a resource for groups to expand their understanding of the issues and clarify a few key questions:*

- 1. What are our most important national objectives?*
- 2. What values are communicated through our national choices?*
- 3. How does our faith inform our decisions and witness?*

## CONTENTS

Background on Iraq	2
Reflecting on the Timeline, Effects of Sanctions on Children, Marwah: One Child's Story	3
Just War Criteria, War with Iraq, Biblical Peacemaking	4
Worship Resources	6
Recommended Web Sites, Books, ELCA Resources Acting on what we know...	7
How to Use This Resource	8
Acknowledgments	
Concerns About War With Iraq	

## ELCA Presiding Bishop's Statement on Iraq

August 30, 2002

In recent days, leaders of the United States government have talked openly about the possibility of a pre-emptive strike against the government of Iraq and its leader, Saddam Hussein.

As presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), I am deeply concerned about any such action. In the 1995 ELCA social statement, "For Peace in God's World," we said that, as Christians, "the love of our neighbor obligates us to act to prevent wars and seek alternatives to them." This is a time to stop the use of hostile rhetoric and verbal threats, and to focus again on diplomacy.

While we are fully aware of the potential threat posed by the government of Iraq and its leader, I believe it is wrong for the United States to seek to overthrow the regime of Saddam Hussein with military action. Morally, I oppose it because I know a war with Iraq will have great consequences for the people of Iraq, who have already suffered through years of war and economic sanctions. I do not believe such a war can be justified under the historic principles of "just war." Further, I believe it is detrimental to U.S. interests to take unilateral military action against Iraq when there is already strong international support for weapons inspections, and when it is apparent that most other world governments oppose military action. I also believe that U.S. military action at this time will further destabilize the region...

I call upon members of our congregations to be fervent in prayer, engaged in conversation with one another and with our leaders. The ELCA encourages the participation by all people of faith in the affairs of government. Our church has developed and is expanding a practice of engaging in moral deliberation on difficult social issues...During these discussions it is important for all of us to listen to and respect the views of everyone. We must oppose racist and enemy images that dehumanize, deny the love of God for all people and do not help in resolving conflict.

In the final analysis, we must stand unequivocally for peace. "Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding." (Romans 14:19)

The Rev. Mark S. Hanson,  
Presiding Bishop,  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



## Background on Iraq

*Iraq is located in the historic region of Mesopotamia and is noted for the "Fertile Crescent" formed by the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, thought by some to be the setting for the Garden of Eden. A cultural center of the region this civilization gave the world one of the earliest written alphabets, legal systems and urban planning design. Before coming under control of the British Empire during the first World War, the territory that is now Iraq was conquered by the Turks, Persians, Assyrians, Mongols, and others. Iraq's population is 23 million and it is about twice the size of Idaho. Before the invasion of Kuwait, Iraq was a relatively wealthy country; now a person is doing well to receive a salary of \$10 or \$15 a month.*

1968 Ba'th party takes control of the Iraq government; a cousin of Saddam Hussein becomes president.

1979 Saddam Hussein forces out his cousin, takes over as President, Prime Minister, and Commander-in-Chief, and executes many political opponents.

1980 Iran-Iraq war erupts. Iraq is supported by the US in part as a way to confront Iranian fundamentalism.

1984 Following at least two years of arms sales and support for Iraq, the United States restores full diplomatic ties despite United Nations reports of chemical weapon use against Iranian troops.

1988 After an eight year war that leaves an estimated one million dead and both countries shattered, Iran and Iraq agree to a UN-brokered cease fire.

1990 Iraq invades and occupies Kuwait; the United Nations condemns the invasion and imposes strict economic sanctions on the Iraqi government.

1991 Iraq refuses to comply with UN resolutions to leave Kuwait, prompting US-led UN coalition air strikes and ground war which disables much of the Iraqi military and liberates Kuwait, but also destroys Iraqi water, sewer and electric systems.

The UN establishes monitoring and verification of Iraq's weapons program and military capability.

1992 Reports by UN and other independent groups document the negative impact of the sanctions on the Iraqi people. The UN agency, UNICEF, estimates that by 1999, 500,000 children died.

1995 The UN Security Council "Oil for Food" program allows Iraq to sell a limited amount of oil and use the money to purchase food, medicine, etc. Iraq refuses to apply for a year, so the first shipment doesn't arrive until March 1997. In the end, it provides only a dollar a month per Iraqi.

1998 The humanitarian crisis in Iraq causes many countries to question the morality of sanctions.

Dennis Halliday, UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, resigns in September saying "we are in the process of destroying an entire society."

In October, the US refuses to allow the UN to assure Iraq that sanctions would be lifted when Iraqi disarmament is verified. Iraq ends cooperation with the UN for two weeks. A month later, UN inspectors are withdrawn from Iraq, in part to allow US and British air strikes to resume; they continue to this day.

1999 UNICEF surveys reveal that in most of Iraq, the death rate of children under five in 1994-'99 was more than double the rate in 1984-'89.

2000 UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Hans von Sponeck, resigns in protest of sanctions.

2002 US begins troop buildup in Spring. By year's end, more than 60,000 US troops were in the region a number scheduled to grow dramatically in 2003.

The US Congress passes a resolution giving Pres. Bush authority to take military action if he deems it necessary. The vote is 296 to 133 in the House and 77 to 23 in the Senate.

President Bush presents the case against Iraq at the UN on September 12; the UN Security Council passes Resolution 1441 on November 8.

Resistance to war mounts in the fall. Hundreds of thousands of letters pour into Congress. Prayer vigils and marches are held in hundreds of cities and communities across the US and in Europe.

Leaders of more than a dozen religious denominations and of the National Council of Churches urge President Bush to reverse the momentum towards war. (The NCC's 36 member denominations represent 50 million people.)

The UN Security Council sends weapons inspection teams to Iraq in November. Iraq submits a 12,000 page report on its weapons programs.

## Reflecting on the Timeline

Since weapons inspectors left Iraq in 1998, the absence of monitors has raised serious concerns about the Iraqi weapons programs. In November of 2002, negotiations allowed UN inspections teams to return. Iraq gave the UN a 12,000 page report on the state of its weapons program which appeared to change few minds.

Although polls in the fall of 2002 showed support for US military preparations, the majority of Americans also felt uneasy about a preemptive strike. In October, a rising number of citizens expressed their opposition to the war through a flood of letters and petitions to their Members of Congress. By late fall, many church leaders had sent letters and visited with Members of Congress and the White House to underline their resistance to the use of armed force. Several delegations of religious leaders went to Iraq to meet with the people and visit churches. By early-January, 40 to 50% of the US public said that the President had not made a compelling case for the war.

Demonstrations have been held in over 200 cities and communities. Especially large groups marched in San Francisco (50,000) and Washington, DC (over 100,000 – the largest such march since the Vietnam War). Many thousands also demonstrated in Seattle, Chicago, Boston, San Antonio, Atlanta, and elsewhere. Others took lessons in nonviolent civil disobedience from veterans of earlier struggles. For example, thousands of people who have signed the “Peace Pledge” have vowed to commit civil disobedience as practiced by Gandhi and King if the US moves toward war with Iraq or undermines civil liberties.

### Leader’s Notes for Session #1:

1. *Begin with prayer and read the last two paragraphs of Bishop Hanson’s “Statement on Iraq” to set a tone of respectful discussion.*
2. *(Pass out and Invite folks to read the page entitled “Background on Iraq.”) What parts of the timeline surprised you? Does it raise any questions about US policy for you?*
3. *(Read aloud the story of Marwah: and review the effects of economic sanctions outlined on this page.) How did Marwah’s story affect you? What has been the impact of sanctions on the Iraqi people?*
4. *(Read Bishop Hanson’s statement.) In light of our discussion, which of the points of the Bishop do you find most helpful? What would you add? What are our responsibilities in Iraq?*



## Effects of Sanctions on Children

The original stated purpose of the current sanctions on Iraq, begun after the Gulf War, was to prevent materials from entering Iraq that could be used to make prohibited weapons. Although other arguments for them have been given such as punishing Iraq for non-cooperation, it is not Saddam Hussein but the Iraqi people, particularly the children, who have paid an enormous price for them.

An independent study published 19 months after the end of the Gulf War in the respected *New England Journal of Medicine* reported a disturbing trend that would become Iraq’s future. During the first eight months of 1991, nearly 47,000 more children than normal died in Iraq, while the country’s infant mortality rates more than doubled. Low birth weights increased from 4.5% to 21.1% between 1991 and 1994, and sadly remain at 25% today.

According to a report by two former UN Coordinators for Iraq, between five and six thousand children die each month in Iraq due to contaminated water, lack of medication and malnutrition. Dehydration, cholera, and other water-borne illnesses continue to take the lives of the young. UNICEF reports assert that the sanctions have contributed to the deaths of one million Iraqi civilians, half are children under five years of age. Recent church delegations to Iraq confirm that this tragedy continues.

## Marwah: One Child’s Story

Marwah was barely ten years old. A bright, good-looking girl from Nasriyah, she lived in a one-room house. In a wheelchair and frail, she had been injured by a faulty ceiling fan which had fallen on her.

When a recent delegation of American Christians first met her, Marwah was totally dependent on her mother since her father had died during the wars. A German doctor in the group realized that she could be cured from the injury and showed a local physiotherapist the methods that could be used.

Unfortunately the lack of medical supplies kept Marwah from having the treatment. Ten years of sanctions have had regressive effects on the high medical standards Iraqis once enjoyed. On a later trip, visitors asked about Marwah and learned that she had died in her wheelchair. With treatment she could be alive today.

Marwah story and photo courtesy of the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program



# Just War?

The phrase “Just War” is often used by politicians, the media, history teachers, and church leaders in discussions about a possible war. However, we do not often hear the actual criteria of just war theory — or see how it is applied. As Christians, we must understand the just war tradition that has claimed to be instructive in both secular and religious debates about war if we are to evaluate the arguments our leaders provide. This page and the next will help you and your group to examine just war criteria, and as well to explore Jesus’ teachings about peace (*see activities for sessions two and three on the next page*).

## THE JUST WAR CRITERIA

### Before a war:

1. The war must be a **LAST RESORT**. Every effort at negotiation and arbitration must have been tried.
2. The war must have a **JUST CAUSE** — to protect the innocent and defend against unjust demands and threats of force.
3. The war must be waged by a **LEGITIMATE AUTHORITY**.
4. It must be **FORMALLY DECLARED**.
5. It must be fought with **PEACEFUL INTENTIONS**. It cannot be waged with a crusade mentality, self interest or pride, but must be for the well-being of all people.
6. There must be a reasonable **HOPE OF SUCCESS**. The goals must be achievable without squandering the life and property of the people.
7. The means used must be **PROPORTIONATE** to the ends sought. War must not cause unnecessary destruction that outweighs the final good the war seeks to achieve.

### During a war:

1. **NONCOMBATANTS** must be given immunity. No harm is to be done to those who can do no harm (civilians).
2. **PRISONERS** must be treated humanely.
3. **INTERNATIONAL TREATIES** and conventions must be honored.

### After a war:

1. The defeated are to be shown **MERCY**. This includes assistance with rebuilding what has been destroyed.

If we made full use of the principles of just war, the quality of our moral deliberation about conflict would be improved. These criteria can help us think critically of the tendency of any society to justify its own violence. They can also assist us to confront the various effects of violence, and encourage us to be creative about alternatives.

But as Christians, we must also critically examine these criteria in light of the Christian ethic of love, forgiveness, and the sanctity of every human life. We look to Jesus, who lived a life of love and taught his followers to use nonviolence as they struggled for justice. For many Christians, His message calls us to transcend just war thinking and to embrace alternatives like Just Peace thinking and Christian Nonviolence.

In the past our justifications for war have been faulty. One Example:

Following the Spanish-American war, the Philippines were handed over from Spanish to US control. When Philippine citizens resisted, the US went to war against them from 1899-1902.

At the time, Filipinos were depicted as an uncivilized people who would benefit from the hand of the US government and Christianity. Victory, it was said, would also open up new economic markets. To growing protest at home, the US army wiped out dozens of towns. An estimated one-third of the population was killed.

What was once considered a justifiable war is now seen by most historians as a bloody war of self interest.

In fact, it is difficult to find a war that *was not* considered just by the leading political and religious figures of the day.

The debate about Iraq has included almost no discussion of an important alternative to war. Consider: In the last 60 years, two-thirds of the world's people experienced change by nonviolent movements that were successful beyond anyone's expectation. They worked against some of the most ruthless regimes of the century: apartheid in South Africa, Ceausescu in Romania, Marcos in the Philippines, the Nazis in Denmark and Norway.... The most successful route to “regime change” of our time has been absent from the debate about Iraq! We owe it to ourselves, the Iraqi people, and our future to examine the power of this option. [For an essay on this alternative and the *Wall of Hope* with 120 more examples; see [Ipf website](#), page 7.]

Session two,

## War with Iraq: Can it be Just?

Applying the criteria:

For this activity, break up into small groups, and assign each group one or several Just War criteria below. Each group has the task of applying their criteria to war with Iraq, and deciding whether the war does or does not meet that standard. Share the questions below, and encourage the group to ask questions of their own. After 10-15 minutes, have each small group share their conclusions. Invite the rest of the group to raise questions to encourage critical thinking. Conclude with a group reflection on the main question: Can this war be just?

1. **War must be a Last Resort:** Did we try negotiation and nonviolent intervention before using violence? Are there any alternatives we haven't tried?
2. **War must have a Just Cause:** What is a just cause? Who has authority to decide? What if both sides think their cause is just?
3. **War must be waged by a Legitimate Authority:** What role should the UN play? How do citizens give their government authority?
4. **War must be Formally Declared:** Has the US Congress declared war? What should the process be? What are the pros and cons of the US process so far?
5. **It must be fought with Peaceful Intentions:** How could war affect the long-term well-being of people in Iraq, the US, the world? What might be our motivations?
6. **There must be reasonable Prospect of Success:** What is the goal? What could be the costs and for whom? Who decides what success is?
7. **The means must be Proportionate to the ends:** What does proportionality mean? Will the goal outweigh the destruction?
8. **Noncombatants must be given Immunity:** Will the lives of civilians be protected? How will this be done?
9. **Prisoners must be treated Humanely:** What does humanely mean? What should their rights be?
10. **International Treaties must be Honored:** Are we breaking any international agreements? How would we find out? Why should we honor such agreements?
11. **The defeated are to be shown Mercy:** Are we confident the US public supports the cost of reconstruction?

*Leader's Note:* Invite two participants to read "Jesus Third Way," chapter 5 of Walter Wink, *The Powers that Be*, or chapter 9 of his *Engaging the Powers*, and to act out the three examples of Jesus in Matt. 5:38-41 and share Wink's insights on them. See LPF website.

Session three,

## Biblical Peacemaking

Deciding for ourselves:

Whether or not a war meets Just War criteria, violence has drastic consequences for us as individuals, and for our society, our earth, and our faith. In pairs, read and discuss these quotes and bible texts. Select at least one of each that helps you think about war in Iraq. Share your choices and their implications with the group.

"If we are honest, we find the temptation to vengeance in our own hearts. Yet we know that the first real victim of violence is the perpetrator. What Gandhi said is true: 'An eye for an eye results only in two blind persons.'"

- Mary Evelyn Jegen (see also Matthew 7:1-5)

"Violence can never stop violence because its very success leads others to imitate it. Ironically, violence is most dangerous when it succeeds." - Walter Wink (see also Matthew 26:52)

"All discussions of 'just war' start with the assumption that war can be justifiable. But can it? What if we had discussions of 'just slavery' or 'just sexism'?"

- John Stoner (see also Matthew 5: 38-45)

"The followers of Christ have been called to peace.... And they must not only *have* peace but also *make* it. To that end they renounce all violence and tumult. In the cause of Christ nothing is to be gained by such methods."

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer (see also 1 Peter 3:11)

"You can no more win a war than you can win an earthquake."

- Jeanette Rankin (see also Micah 4:2-4)

"It really boils down to this: that all life is interrelated. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied into a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

- Martin Luther King, Jr. (see also Isaiah 65: 19-20a)

One way Christians can witness to their faith is to become active in the UN Decade for Peace, a worldwide effort of the ELCA, Lutheran World Federation, the World Council of Churches (through a parallel program), and countless schools, churches, community groups, and cities. Such efforts at building a new "culture of nonviolence" offer hope of breaking out of the "spiral of violence" that pervades our world. [See page 7 for more on the Decade.]

# Worship Resources

## Call to Worship

Loving God, we come to hear your word, to be refreshed and filled with your presence. We know from Isaiah that your thoughts are not like ours and your ways differ from our own. As high as the heavens are above the earth so high are your thoughts above ours. Like the snow and rain your word comes down from the sky to water the earth. Refresh us now with your words and enable us to be signs of your healing presence.

## Prayer of Confession

Loving Creator, you call us to be peacemakers. You challenge us to love our enemies and to bless those who persecute us. But this is hard to do when we are anxious and do not know who to believe or trust. When our nation began to prepare for war, we grew silent. Forgive us for our caution, our denial of your presence. Help us to discern again what is pleasing in your sight. Help us to resist evil with good. Help us to discover who our enemies really are and to love them with the love you offer all people.

## Litany for Those in Iraq

A girl dies not of illness but for lack of medication,

*Help us to see her as our sister, God.*

A youth shakes his fist at us and shouts, "Killers"

*Help us to see him as our brother, God.*

A quiet family splits a chunk of bread five ways,  
savoring each morsel.

*Help us to see them as our kin, God.*

An old woman grieves for the Iraq of her childhood;  
once proud and prosperous, it now waits.

*Help us to see her as a wise one, God*

Show us ways to support those who seek peace and those who do not. Melt our animosity and our fears so that we might embrace the world with your strong and loving Spirit. Be with us as we pursue life. Amen

## Blessing (After the Eucharist)

God, bless the earth and all that dwell therein. Help us to remember that you are the God of all Creation and love what you made. As our bodies may be nourished by this food, may our spirits be nourished by the infinite variety in your abundance.

## Closing Prayer

We leave now, Lord, having been stretched and refilled. What we do with your nourishment is in our hands. Help us find the courage to listen for your thoughts, and help our eyes to see your face in all the faces we encounter in the days ahead. Give us the courage to open our hearts wide enough to embrace our brothers and sisters all around the world. Abide in us and give us peace. *Amen*

## Readings for Peace from Three Traditions

### *From the Jewish Tradition*

Micah 4: v. 2-4

And many nations shall come and say:  
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,  
to the house of the God of Jacob;  
that he may teach us his ways  
and that we may walk in his paths."  
For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,  
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem,  
He shall judge between many peoples,  
and shall arbitrate between strong nations far away;  
they shall beat their swords into plowshares  
and their spears into pruning hooks;  
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,  
neither shall they learn war any more;  
but they shall all sit under their own vines  
and under their own fig trees,  
and no one shall make them afraid;  
for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.

### *From the Christian Tradition*

Matthew 5: 9-12

Blessed are the peacemakers  
for they shall be called the children of God.  
Blessed are those who are persecuted  
for righteousness' sake  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
Blessed are you when people revile you,  
and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil  
against you on my account.  
Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven,  
for in the same way they persecuted  
the prophets who were before you."

### *From the Islamic Tradition*

Readings: From the Holy Qur'an

If the enemy incline toward peace, do thou (also) incline towards peace, and trust in God: for He is the One that heareth and knoweth (all things). [Sura VIII. v. 61]

And the servants of (God) Most Gracious are those who walk on the earth in humility, and when the ignorant address them, they say, "Peace!" [Sura XXV. v. 63]

O Mankind! We created you from a single pair of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you know each other (not that you may despise each other. Verily the most honored of you in the sight of God is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And God has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things). [Sura XLIX. v. 13]



## Recommended Resources

### Helpful Websites

#### *For information on Iraq, especially on sanctions:*

www.epic-usa.org Education for Peace in Iraq Center  
 www.cam.ac.uk/societies/casi/ Campaign Against Sanctions on Iraq  
 www.vitw.org Voices in the Wilderness  
 www.childrenofiraq.org Children of Iraq Newsletter:  
 www.un.org/Depts/oip Office of the UN Iraq Program

#### *Religious sources of information on the larger issues:*

www.sojo.net Sojourners magazine, Sojo news  
 www.for-usa.org Fellowship of Reconciliation  
 www.afsc.org/iraq/ American Friends Service Committee  
 www.pepm.org Peaceful Ends, Peaceful Means  
 www.nccusa.org National Council of Churches in Christ, USA:  
 www.ecumenismnow.org World Council of Churches  
 www.ecapc.org Every Church a Peace Church  
 www.ipj-ppj.org Families Against Violence Advocacy Network

#### *Information on peace activities in the US:*

www.MoveOn.org                      www.UnitedforPeace.org  
 www.PeacePledge.org              www.PeacefulTomorrows.org  
 www.VeteransforPeace.org      www.CommonDreams.org  
 www.fpif.org                        www.AlterNet.org  
 www.SNOWcoalition.org        www.salsa.net/peace

### Outstanding Books

*The Powers that Be: Theology for a New Millennium* by Walter Wink (Doubleday, 2000), esp. chaps. 5-8; or his more in-depth *Engaging the Powers* (Augsburg Fortress, 1992), esp. ch. 6-13

*When War is Unjust: Being Honest in Just-War Thinking* by John Howard Yoder (Augsburg, 1984) a good brief overview



photo by Bob Haynes

### Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

8765 W. Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631 800-NET-ELCA

For resources on advocacy, legislation, prayer vigils, Bishop's statements, social statements, contact the Lutheran Office for Governmental Affairs, www.LOGA.org 202-783-7501

The *Journal of Lutheran Ethics* posts many helpful essays on Iraq: www.elca.org/dcs/jle See also *The Lutheran* magazine editorial: www.thelutheran.org/0210/6.htm

For information on and from Israel and Palestine: The Middle East Advocacy Network www.elca.org/middleeast

For information and resources on the UN Decade for Peace for the Children of the World: www.elca.org/dcs/socialjustice/

For United Nations resolutions and programs, The Lutheran Office for World Community: Lutherans.at.un@ecunet.org

For ideas on leading good discussions "Eight Guides for Talking About Moral Issues" www.thelutheran.org/0010/page25.html

For single copies of this resource contact the ELCA Commission for Women: (800) NET-ELCA ext. 2860, jday@elca.org or from LPF (below); for larger quantities contact LPF.

**Lutheran Peace Fellowship (LPF)**, offers a newsletter, resources, and workshops on peacemaking for youth and adults. LPF, 1710 11th Ave, Seattle, WA 98122 206-720-0313 lpf@ecunet.org lpfyouth@yahoo.com www.LutheranPeace.org

**LPF's web site** posts articles on Christian peacemaking, alternatives to war, etc....Iraq statements by religious leaders...the "Wall of Hope"...an Iraq resource guide with web links on sanctions, just war, economics, dissent, alternatives. A full-color **poster** with the photo of Iraqi children on page one is available for \$6 from LPF.

### Acting on what we know

*There are many ways to give voice to our concern:*

**Attend** vigils and protests against war. **Become active** in a local peace coalition. **Read** alternative sources of news.

**Create** space for authentic conversation with neighbors and friends. **Raise** the deeper questions, the alternatives to war.

**Write** letters-to-the editor. **Call** in to radio talk shows. **Join** a newspaper signature ad. **Push** for better media coverage.

**Sign the Peace Pledge** co-sponsored by LPF. **Participate** in nonviolent civil disobedience. **Encourage** local groups to organize trainings on nonviolence and forums on alternatives.

**Be creative!** The most effective actions convey humanity, send a clear message, are visual and inviting, for example:

- ◆ A candlelight vigil surrounding a lake or local landmark
- ◆ A "Peace Paint-in" to create banners for peace by students or Sunday Schools to display on cars, freeway overpasses...

Our faith empowers us to join with others to take a stand against military action in Iraq. We know an alternative to violence and passivity: Jesus' Third Way of caring, nonviolent discipleship.

## How to Use This Resource

in adult forums, workshops and retreats

**Session 1, Overview:** *Duplicate page 2 or 1-3 for participants to discuss Bishop Hanson's statement, the Background on Iraq page, sanctions and humanitarian issues. Check web sites on page 7 for up-to-date information.*

**Session 2:** Introduce Just War criteria and examples like the Philippines war; apply criteria to Iraq. *(Share just war criteria on page 4 and prepare to lead the activity for Session Two on page 5.)*

**Session 3:** Discuss the biblical basis of peacemaking and quotations on war and nonviolence. *(Duplicate Session 3 material or use a chalk board for Biblical verses and read quotes aloud.)*

**Session 4:** In session 3, invite participants to choose and look up a web site from page 7, and to bring what they find to help the group discuss concerns like those summarized at right.

*Begin sessions with prayers and if you wish, multi-faith readings on peace (e.g. on page 6). Invite your church's worship planners to use page 6 in a Sunday Service and to make education and advocacy materials available.*

**Acknowledgments:** *We are grateful to the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program for permitting us to adapt material from "Iraq, A Resource for Presbyterians." Thanks, too, for the grant from the ELCA Commission for Women. Photos were shared freely by Bob Haynes. Just war, resource, advocacy, and concerns material appeared in previous LPF resources. Developed by Glen Gersmehl and Jean Martensen, with helpful comments from Wendy Alcantara, Alan Forsberg, Susan Ives, Bert Sachs. and Lilv Wu.*



Photo by Bob Haynes

## Concerns About War with Iraq

**1. The Iraqi people have already suffered enough** in more than two decades of war and hardship. Eleven years of US-backed sanctions alone have killed more than a million innocent civilians, half of them children.

**2. Military action could result in a great many civilian casualties** and cause suffering of countless innocent people. A war could seriously damage the environment and the US and world economies, the effects of which would fall most heavily on the most vulnerable.

**3. It is not in the US interest to take unilateral military action opposed by most of the world.** Instead, we should cooperate with international efforts like UN inspections to control weapons of mass destruction.

**4. Unilateral overthrow of another government heightens fears** and concerns within other countries regarding American respect for international law and for the rights of other nations.

**5. The preemptive use of military force by the US sets a dangerous precedent.** Do we want other nations to feel they can justify preemptive strikes, because of weapons of their neighbors, grievances, fights over resources, etc.?

**6. US military action is likely to spark more terrorism and further destabilize the region.** Militants in other countries are likely to seize the opportunity to recruit more adherents and further incite people against the United States and allied countries.

**7. War with Iraq diverts attention from addressing the root causes of conflicts and terrorism** such as

extreme poverty and hunger. It also distracts us from other priorities like our economy, schools, and environment.

**8. A war with Iraq will drain our resources and prevent creative and sustained efforts to bring a lasting, just peace to Palestine and Israel.** Many countries believe our focus on Iraq detracts from our ability to help resolve this deepening conflict.

**9. War could create an estimated 1 and 1/2 million Iraqi refugees** in neighboring countries while hundreds of thousands could be displaced within the country. The UN estimates it might need to feed 7 to 8 million people. The use of chemical or biological weapons would drastically complicate conditions.

**10. War in Iraq could cost the United States as much as 1.9 trillion dollars over a decade,** according to a report issued in late 2002 by the respected American Academy of Arts and Sciences. (President Bush put the direct costs at \$200 billion.) The 1991 Gulf War cost about \$61 billion, but allies reimbursed all but \$7 billion.

**11. The American people have growing doubts about starting a war.** Some wonder whether it's mostly about oil. By January 2003, polls showed that 40 to 50% of Americans believed that the President had not made a compelling case for war in Iraq. Without the support of US allies and the UN, many more people opposed war.

**12. Prejudice would increase** if people were to see Arabs, Muslims, Christians and Americans as enemies. Hostility towards those who are different might deepen in the US and elsewhere.

Lutheran Peace Fellowship  
1710 Eleventh Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98122-2420

Nonprofit Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Seattle, Washington  
Permit #325