

# Tool Kit

## Organize a Vigil

Marking

*Two Years of  
War in Iraq*

**March 18-20, 2005**

**SOJOURNERS**

Faith, Politics, and Culture

[www.sojo.net](http://www.sojo.net)

**M**arch 19<sup>th</sup>, 2005, marks two years of the current war in Iraq. Prior to the U.S.-led invasion, thousands of candlelight vigils around the globe showed the world's resistance to war. On the one-year anniversary of the invasion, many Sojourners readers organized vigils again to demonstrate that people of faith still objected to this war.

Now, after two years of bloodshed, Sojourners has issued an urgent call to action to honor the lives lost in war, and to advance the imperative for peace. Since March 19, 2003, almost 1,500 U.S. soldiers have been killed, and over 10,000 Americans have been wounded, according to the Department of Defense. Almost half of U.S. military deaths have occurred *after* the "transfer of power" on June 29<sup>th</sup> of last year. Tens of thousands of Iraqis—soldiers and civilians—have lost their lives.

Although the majority of the Bush administration's premises for going to war have been proven false, U.S. taxpayers continue to pay. If the Bush Administration's recent request for \$82 billion additional funding is approved, the war with Iraq will have cost almost \$210 billion. This is a far cry from the original estimate, given by the Office of Management and Budget, of \$60 billion—and soldiers in Iraq still suffer shortages of equipment and protective gear.

U.S. citizens have also suffered on the domestic front, as crucial

domestic programs that benefit low-income families have been threatened in the President's budget and the already-ballooning national deficit has swelled to compensate for the cost of war. (To read more about the cost of war in your own city and state, see [www.nationalpriorities.org/warstatecost](http://www.nationalpriorities.org/warstatecost).)

Sojourners calls on people of faith to pray and remember the dead and wounded, and advocate for lasting peace and security at home and abroad.

The worship resources included in this tool kit are suggestions only. Organizers and pastors should feel free to create their own vigil program. Most of these worship materials come from Christian sources, but much of the information in this kit can be adapted for an interfaith service. We encourage vigil organizers to invite members of the military, their families, war veterans, or others directly affected by the war in Iraq to speak at the vigil.

Should organizers desire a shorter vigil that is more open to people outside the Church, we suggest reading a list of the names of soldiers and civilians killed in Iraq, with time between groups of names for reflection, silence, or prayer.

Names of casualties can be found here: [www.antiwar.com/casualties/list.php](http://www.antiwar.com/casualties/list.php)

If you have not already signed up to organize a vigil, please visit

www.sojo.net. If you have any questions about the contents of this tool kit, e-mail: organize@sojo.net.

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## Organizing a Vigil

Vigils can be organized in your house of worship or in a public space, and can take the form of a traditional service or a public demonstration, depending on the needs and interests of your community. Here are some ways to create a well attended and effective vigil.

- Establish a small planning committee. This committee can work within an existing committee, like the social action or public witness committee.
- Reach out to other churches, synagogues, mosques, and other houses of worship in the area to organize and participate in the vigil together. If you decide to organize an interfaith vigil, invite each faith to read and pray from their own tradition and talk among the groups about how to be respectful of each tradition.
- If you choose to organize a public vigil, select a location with symbolic meaning, such as a town hall, war or veterans' memorial, or a prominent public park. You may need to apply for and secure a permit in advance of a public vigil—begin that process as soon as possible.
- Create a list of necessary equipment and decide who will provide it—sound systems, megaphones or microphones, candles, programs, podium, and signs.
- Take out an advertisement in a local paper or other news source. Publish the vigil in church bulletins.
- Post and pass out fliers in public spaces like bus stops, subway stations, laundromats, stores, restaurants, and community centers. Ask permission where necessary.
- Post your vigil on the Sojourners' Meetup website at [www.sojo.net](http://www.sojo.net).
- E-mail or telephone friends, colleagues, church members, and local leaders the day before the vigil to remind them to attend.

# Publicizing

## Your Vigil in the Media

There are various ways to publicize your event. Advertise it in church bulletins, libraries, and community newsletters. It's also important to work with the media: television stations, newspapers, and community radio.

If you host a vigil, and especially if it occurs in a public place, you may want to send out a press advisory. A press advisory will serve two purposes: to create publicity for the event and invite more members of the community, and to invite members of the press to cover the event.

Press advisories should be faxed or mailed several days in advance of your vigil, to one reporter per news outlet. Call the outlet to find out where to send your advisory. At most television stations and newspapers, the person to contact is the Assignment Desk Editor, who will either be most likely to cover your story or will know where to direct your call. You could also send the advisory to the Religion Reporter or a Community News Reporter.

### Writing a Press Advisory

Press advisories should be succinct—about a half a page—and be marked clearly with the words "Press Advisory."

The first paragraph should include the who, what, where, why, and when of the vigil. For example: "St. Michael's Church will host a candlelight vigil marking two years of war with Iraq on Saturday evening, March 19<sup>th</sup>, at 8 PM in our Elm Street parish. We invite members of the community to come together in remembrance of lives lost and in prayer for peace." If a speaker

will be present, include that information as well.

The second paragraph of a press advisory should include a deeper description of the purpose of the event and how it was organized. Do not assume the reader will understand the need for a vigil.

You might want to include a quote from a spokesperson of the organization in charge of the vigil. Make it clear and to the point.

At the end of the advisory, type "#" or "-30-." Then include two contact names with phone numbers and e-mail addresses. Print it on the letterhead of your church or hosting organization.

### Follow-Up Calls

A few days after you send the advisory, call the reporter to follow up. Ask for the reporter by name, and then tell them who you are and why you're calling. Example: "Hi, I'm Jane Lopez, calling from Fellowship Church to make sure you received the press advisory we sent about the vigil marking two years of war in Iraq, which is scheduled for 8 PM on March 19<sup>th</sup> at our church." Once they answer, ask if they have a few minutes to discuss it. Don't assume a reporter has time to talk.

For more information on working with the media, including samples and writing a longer press release on the day of your event to encourage further coverage, check out

[http://www.actionforchange.org/launch\\_guide/reaching\\_out.html](http://www.actionforchange.org/launch_guide/reaching_out.html).

# Public Actions

## After a Service

Some vigil hosts may choose to organize a candlelight march to a local town hall, municipal building, or other government center.

Small candles (with drip protectors!) may be made at home or purchased at your local church supply store. If you plan to occupy the street, you may also need to obtain a permit from your local police department.

Participants could walk to city hall in silence or in song. Once you arrive at your destination, a litany of the names of soldiers killed could be read (see <http://www.sojo.net/action/liturgy>, for example), or a statement from a spokesperson about the war in Iraq: the lives lost, the domestic costs, and the need for a solution.

Especially if a public event like this takes place, it's a good idea to get media attention—this will amplify your voice and draw more people to your church or organization.

# Keeping People Engaged

## How to Organize in the Weeks Following Your Vigil

In order to continue to engage the people who attend your vigil, it will be necessary to know who they are. Be sure to have a sign-up sheet at the door for people who want to stay in contact with you by e-mail or telephone.

One way to involve the busy layperson in political action is to make it easy for them to be in contact with their Congressional representatives. There are several ways to encourage people to contact their Senators and Representatives.

### Action Alerts

An action alert is an e-mail or printed notice that goes out to your entire network encouraging them to contact Congress about a specific issue or piece of legislation. An action alert should be concise, but explanatory: give a description and background information about the issue, convincing readers that this issue is relevant and demands their attention.

The alert should also include a sample letter to Congress about the issue—people are much less likely to act if they have to write the letter themselves. After the sample letter, include the e-mail or mailing addresses of your representatives (if the alert is only sent to others in your Congressional District), or a link to all the Congressional addresses (if the alert is sent to various regions).

Click here to find your representatives:  
<http://www.congressmerge.com/onlineedb/>

Be sure to ask people to notify you when they've contacted their representative. That way you can keep track of how effective your action alert is, and alert the media to its success! Follow up with your representative to ask if her or she has received the alerts and ask what action they are taking. To see some sample action alerts, check out

<http://www.sojo.net/index.cfm?action=action.home>.

### Sign-On Letters

A sign-on letter is a letter to Congress (or a local elected official) signed either by several members of your church, or—if the congregation is in agreement—by one representative of the entire congregation.

Members of a small committee or ask force (like the church's Peace and Justice Commission, for example) should write the letter and relate the issue to the signers' religious faith. Identify the group(s) you represent, and include signatures at the bottom.

Be sure to send a copy of your letter to your regional church body, and to your denominational headquarters. Sign-on letters can also be submitted to local papers as Op-Ed pieces.

*From Call to Renewal:*

[http://www.calltorenewal.org/public\\_policy/index.cfm/action/influence\\_policy.html](http://www.calltorenewal.org/public_policy/index.cfm/action/influence_policy.html)

### Congregational Resolutions

A congregational resolution is another way for your entire church to make a public statement about the war in Iraq. It should be similar to a sign-on letter, but in the form of a position statement.

A brief example:

**Whereas** Christ commits Christians to a strong presumption against war;

**Whereas** U.S. taxpayers are being forced to pay the costs of a war without proven premises and with no reliable exit strategy;

**Resolved** that the congregation of St. Andrew's hereby commit to call on our elected officials to do everything possible to advance the imperative for peace.

Congregational Resolutions, like sign-on letters, should be sent to regional church bodies and denominational headquarters.

### SojoCircles

Around the country, small groups of people have formed to study and discuss Sojourners' printed resources on a regular basis. We encourage you to join an existing group, or form a new one. SojoCircles provide a venue for local and national political action—writing letters, publishing Op-Eds, and influencing the public debate.

Click here to learn more about SojoCircles:

[http://www.sojo.net/index.cfm?action=get\\_connected.sojocircles](http://www.sojo.net/index.cfm?action=get_connected.sojocircles)

# An Order of Worship

with Resources from Various  
Christian Traditions

*Any portion of this Order of Worship may be used, altered, or shortened according to your needs.*

## Silent Reflection

## Greeting/Explanation of the Need for a Vigil

## Call to Worship

*Based on Acts 10:34–38:*

We come together to worship the God of Abraham and Sarah, Hagar and Ishmael. We come together in mourning and remembrance as we mark the passage of two years of war. We come together to pray for peace.

We know the message God sent to Israel and to the church. God sent Jesus, who is ruler of all, preaching peace.

We gather to proclaim and hear Jesus' message of peace, and like him we will seek to do good and heal all who are oppressed by evil, poverty, war, and injustice by the power of God, who is judge of the living and the dead.

*Adapted from the Peace and Justice  
Support Network of the  
Mennonite Church USA:*

<http://peace.mennolink.org/resources/iraqaugust/prayers.html>

**Hymn** *See hymn suggestions on page 11*

## Opening Prayers

God of desert and oasis, of rich and poor, of saint and sinner, we lift our prayer to you, most holy one. We come to this holy space not to block out the world nor its cries and groaning. Rather, we come to integrate our world into our worship, our politics into our prayers. We come because this world, broken and mended, struggling and strong, is the world you love in all its wild diversity. We are a people of incarnational faith. Since Jesus stepped into the muck and mire of the human predicament, we come to you not to escape the harsh realities of the front page and TV newscasts, but to be empowered by your fiery spirit to immerse ourselves, once again, into your wounded world, so in need of healing and wholeness, peace and liberation. Come, God of water and fire, cleanse us, ignite us, to be your people of peace. Amen.

*From the Peace and Justice  
Support Network of the  
Mennonite Church USA*

## Alternate

Eternal God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires, known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Guide the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and praise your holy name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

*From the Presbyterian  
Peacemaking Program:  
[www.pcusa.org/peacemaking](http://www.pcusa.org/peacemaking)*

## Call to Confession

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the

dead by the glory of God, so we too might walk in newness of life.—  
Romans 6:3-4

*From the Presbyterian  
Peacemaking Program*

## **Prayers of Confession**

Have mercy on us, O God, when your children kill each other. Remind us that war is evil and turns life into hell and death. Forgive us. Cure our warring madness. Guide us to pursue justice through nonviolent means. This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

*From the Presbyterian  
Peacemaking Program*

## **Alternate**

Merciful God, in your gracious presence we confess our sin and the sin of this world. You show us the way to peace in Jesus, you call us to love one another, but we are a people divided against each other in our pursuits of power, control, and security. We stray from your intentions. Neighbor turns against neighbor in anger. Nation clashes with nation in war. We abuse your good gifts of imagination and freedom, of intellect and reason, and have turned them into bonds of oppression. Lord, have mercy upon us; heal and forgive us. Touch our minds and fill our hearts with the power of your creative grace. Lead us in the ways of justice, peace, and reconciling love. In Jesus Christ we pray.

*From the Reformed  
Church in America:*

[www.rca.org/mission/witness/iraq/index.html](http://www.rca.org/mission/witness/iraq/index.html)

## **Kyrie Eleison** *(can be sung)*

Lord, have mercy upon us.  
Christ, have mercy upon us.  
Lord, have mercy upon us.

## **Assurance of Forgiveness**

Hear the good news! Who is in a position to condemn? Only Christ, and Christ died for us, Christ rose for us, Christ reigns in power over us, Christ prays for us. God heals the brokenness in our lives and in all creation. In Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. Amen.

*From the Reformed  
Church in America*

## **Hymn: God, Whose Love is Always Stronger** *See page 12*

## **Scripture Reading**

*See suggested scriptures on page 11*

## **Litanies and Lighting of Candles**

*(A meditation or homily or a litany or recitation of the names of those killed may be given by a pastor, community member, or lay leader.)*

Suggestions:

*A Litany of Light in a Time of War* from the National Council of Churches:

[www.ncccusa.org/iraq/litanyoflightforpeace2.html](http://www.ncccusa.org/iraq/litanyoflightforpeace2.html)

*Litany of Intercession* from the Presbyterian Church (USA):

<http://www.pcusa.org/iraq/litanyintercession.htm>

*Litany for Soldiers Killed in Iraq* by Rose Marie Berger, Associate Editor at *Sojourners Magazine*:

<http://www.sojo.net/action/liturgy>

**Hymn** *See hymn suggestions on page 11*

## Affirmation of Faith

Leader: In the midst of hunger and war

*All: We Celebrate the promise of plenty and peace.*

L: In the midst of oppression and tyranny

*A: We celebrate the promise of service and freedom.*

L: In the midst of doubt and despair

*A: We celebrate the promise of faith and hope.*

L: In the midst of fear and betrayal

*A: We celebrate the promise of joy and loyalty.*

L: In the midst of hatred and death

*A: We celebrate the promise of love and life.*

L: In the midst of sin and decay

*A: We celebrate the promise of salvation and renewal.*

L: In the midst of death on every side

*A: We celebrate the promise of the living Christ. Amen.*

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*The Iona Abbey Worship Book*,  
Wild Good Publications.

## Prayers of Intercession

### Prayer for Peace with Iraq

Lord of hope and compassion, friend of Abraham who called our father in faith to journey to a new future, we remember before you the country of Iraq from which he was summoned. Ancient land of the Middle East, realm of the two rivers, birthplace of great cities and of civilization. May we who name ourselves children of Abraham call to mind all the peoples of the Middle East who honor him as father. Those who guard and celebrate the Torah; those for whom the Word has walked on earth and lived among us; those who follow their prophet, who listened for the word in the desert and shaped a community after what he heard. Lord of reconciliation, God of the painful sacrifice uniting

humankind, we long for the day when you will provide for all nations of the earth your blessing of peace. But now when strife and war are at hand, help us to see in each other a family likeness, our inheritance from our one father Abraham. Keep hatred from the threshold of our hearts, and preserve within us a generous spirit which recognizes in both foe and friend a common humanity. This we ask in the name of the one who came to offer us the costly gift of abundant life.

**Alan and Clare Amos**

*Iona Community*

[www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/international/iraq-prayers-e.html](http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/international/iraq-prayers-e.html)

Lord, we pray fervently for the people of Iraq facing the horror of a full-scale war, and for those who are called upon to fight. Help us to persuade world leaders to continue negotiations.

Help all of us: individuals, nations, governments and world leaders to remember the unnecessary loss of life for thousands of innocent people, the scale of human suffering that war brings, the right of Iraqi people to determine their own future, and the gross violations of human rights and crimes against humanity that are committed in the name of war.

Nobody has total power over any country or its people but God alone. Let us be open to God's words in our decisions and try not to be God ourselves.

From the Church of England:  
[www.invitationprayer.org/prayers.html](http://www.invitationprayer.org/prayers.html)

### Prayer in a Time of War

God of infinite mercy, we trust in your good purposes of peace for all your children. We pray for those who at this time face danger in the defense of justice. Watch over those in peril; support those who are anxious for loved ones; gather into your eternal

purpose those who will die. Remove from the hearts of all people the passions that keep alive the spirit of war, and in your goodness, restore peace among us; for the sake of the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ our Lord.

*Book of Common Order  
of the Church of Scotland,  
St. Andrew Press.*

### **A Prayer for Government and Justice**

Leader: Give the government justice, O God, and give righteousness and mercy to those who represent us.

*All: Help us strive together to make government that makes justice for all.*

Leader: God, you demand justice for the poor and deliverance for the needy.

*All: Help us to work steadfastly for political systems that care for the least among us.*

Leader: God, you call us to be peacemakers in all things—large and small.

*All: Help us to seek peace and pursue it with all our hearts, minds, and resources.*

Leader: God of all, give us the courage to speak truth to power.

*All: God of justice, help all those in power to seek truth.*

Leader: O God, give us the conviction to elect a government that prioritizes the least of these. Amen.

*From Sojourners  
[www.sojo.net](http://www.sojo.net)*

### **The Lord's Prayer**

**Hymn** See hymn suggestions on page 11

### **Concluding Charge and Benediction**

*All: O God, lead us from death to life, from falsehood to truth. Lead us from despair to hope, from fear to trust. Lead us from hate to love, from war to peace. Let peace fill our hearts, our world, our universe.*

Leader: Peace to the nations, east and west. Peace to our neighbors, near and far. Peace to all women, peace to all men. The peace of Christ above all peace.

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*The Iona Abbey Worship Book*,  
Wild Good Publications.

### **Alternate**

Lead a life worthy of the vocation to which you have been called, with humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in a bond of peace.

And may the God of peace make you holy in every way and may your whole being—spirit, soul, and body—to be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (*Ephesians 4:1-2 and I Thessalonians 5:23*)

*From the Reformed  
Church in America*

### **Alternate**

The peace of Christ be with you. We have heard God's voice beneath the human word. We have seen the way of Jesus in his deeds of kindness. We have been touched by the Spirit in prayer and song and remembrance. We go forth to witness what we have seen and heard. We go forth to proclaim the peace of the Risen Christ.

*Adapted from the Peace and Justice  
Support Network of the  
Mennonite Church USA*

## **Alternate**

### **A Franciscan Benediction**

May God bless you with discomfort: at easy answers, at half-truths, and superficial relationships—so that you may live deep within your heart.

May God bless you with anger: at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people, so that you may work for justice, freedom, and peace.

May God bless you with tears to shed: for those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation, and war, so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and to turn their pain into joy.

And may God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that you can make a difference in this world, so that you can do what others claim cannot be done. Amen.

*From the National  
Council of Churches:*

[www.nccusa.org/iraq/firstanniversary/iraqprayers.html](http://www.nccusa.org/iraq/firstanniversary/iraqprayers.html)

## Suggested Scripture Passages for Use in a Vigil

Psalms 23, 46, 85, 120, and 121  
 Isaiah 9:1-7 and 35: 1-10  
 Micah 4:1-4  
 Zechariah 9:9-10  
 Matthew 5:1-12 and 28-38  
 Matthew 22:34-40  
 Mark 12:28-34  
 Luke 1:76-79, 6:27-35, and 10:25-28

John 13:31-35  
 Acts 2:14-24  
 Romans 8:18-27  
 Romans 14:19-15:7  
 Ephesians 1:15-23 and 2:11-22  
 1 Peter 1:3-9  
 James 3:13-18  
 Revelation 21:22-22:5

## Suggested Hymns from Various Worship Books

Many other songs of worship exist that would be applicable to a vigil.  
 These are a few from common hymnbooks.

Hymn Title	HB	LBW	RIL	UMH	SNC	HPSS
<i>A Mighty Fortress is Our God</i>	----	228	179	110	----	259,260
<i>Canto de Esperanza</i>	----	----	610	----	282	432
<i>Christ is the World's True Light</i>	492	----	181	188	----	----
<i>Cuando el Pobre</i>	----	----	----	434	----	407
<i>God of Grace and God of Glory</i>	358	415	416	577	----	420
<i>Kyrie Eleison</i>	----	168	564	484	50, 52-54	565, 572-574
<i>Let There Be Light</i>	480	----	492	440	----	----
<i>Lord, Make Us Servants of Your Peace</i>	----	----	----	----	204	374
<i>Not Alone for Mighty Empire</i>	512	437	----	----	----	----
<i>O Day of God, Draw Nigh</i>	----	----	178	730	----	452
<i>O Day of Peace</i>	----	----	----	729	----	450
<i>O For a World</i>	----	----	----	----	----	386
<i>A God of Earth and Altar</i>	511	428	80	----	----	----
<i>O God of Every Nation</i>	----	416	----	435	----	289
<i>O God of Love, O Prince of Peace</i>	483	414	491	----	----	----
<i>O Lord, Hear My Prayer</i>	----	----	----	----	203	----
<i>Osoo/Come Now, O Prince of Peace</i>	----	----	----	----	209	----
<i>Our God, Our Help in Ages Past</i>	----	320	1	----	----	210
<i>Today We Are Called</i>	----	----	----	----	----	434
<i>We Pray for Peace</i>	----	----	----	----	207	----
<i>What Does the Lord Require?</i>	----	----	176	441	----	----
<i>When the Storms of Life are Raging</i>	----	----	----	512	200	----
<i>When Will People Cease Their Fighting?</i>	----	----	----	----	----	401

HB= The Hymnbook  
 LBW= Lutheran Book of Worship  
 RIL= Rejoice in the Lord  
 UMH= United Methodist Hymnal  
 SNC= Sing! A New Creation  
 HPSS= Hymns, Psalms, and Spiritual Songs

**More hymn suggestions from the  
 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:**

[www.elca.org/dcm/worship/peace/print/elca\\_hymns.html](http://www.elca.org/dcm/worship/peace/print/elca_hymns.html)

Suggested Hymn

## **G**od, Whose Love Is Always Stronger

*BEACH SPRING 8.7.8.7 D ("God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending")*

**God, whose love is always stronger than our weakness, pride and fear,  
In your world, we pray and wonder how to be more faithful here.  
Hate too often grows inside us; fear rules what the nations do.  
So we pray, when wars divide us: Give us love, Lord! Make us new!**

**Love is patient, kind and caring, never arrogant or rude,  
Never boastful, all things bearing; love rejoices in the truth.  
When we're caught up in believing war will make the terror cease,  
Show us Jesus' way of living; may our strength be in your peace.**

**May our faith in you be nourished; may your churches hear your call.  
May our lives be filled with courage as we speak your love for all.  
Now emboldened by your Spirit who has given us new birth,  
Give us love, that we may share it till your love renews the earth!**

Biblical References: Romans 8:28-39, 2 Corinthians 12:9, John 3:7, Revelation 21:5, 1 Corinthians 13:4-5, John 14:27, Matthew 5-7, 1 Thessalonians 2:2, John 3:16, 17:18, Psalm 46:9, and Romans 8:22.

Suggested Tune: *The Sacred Harp*, 1844. Harm. James H. Wood, 1958. Alternate Tunes: ABBOT'S LEIGH 8.7.8.7 D ("God Is Here!") by Cyril Vincent Taylor, 1941; HYFRYDOL 8.7.8.7 D ("Alleluia! Sing to Jesus!") by Rowland Hugh Prichard, 1831. Text: Copyright © 2003 by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette. All rights reserved. Email: [bcgillette@comcast.net](mailto:bcgillette@comcast.net)

We are grateful to Dean McIntyre, Director of Music Resources for the United Methodist Church's General Board of Discipleship, who did helpful formatting of "God, Whose Love Is Always Stronger" with the hymn text and music together in both a PDF format (fits perfectly as a half sheet bulletin insert) and Sibelius music notation program (you can listen to the tune online): [http://www.gbod.org/worship/default.asp?act=reader&item\\_id=7598](http://www.gbod.org/worship/default.asp?act=reader&item_id=7598)

Permission for free one-time use is given for a congregational or ecumenical community service. The above copyright and contact information shall be included when reproducing this hymn in worship bulletins. Thank you.

Please share this hymn (with the above copyright and contact information) with other pastors, church musicians and friends in your community and online. Thank you.

Carolyn Winfrey Gillette is the author of *Gifts of Love: New Hymns for Today's Worship* (Geneva Press, 2000) and co-pastor of the [Limestone Presbyterian Church in Wilmington, Delaware](#). A complete list of her hymns can be found at <http://www.firstpresby.org/hymnlist.htm>

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# Confessing Christ in a World of Violence

**O**ur world is wracked with violence and war. But Jesus said: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God" (Matt. 5:9). Innocent people, at home and abroad, are increasingly threatened by terrorist attacks. But Jesus said: "Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you" (Matt. 5:44). These words, which have never been easy, seem all the more difficult today.

Nevertheless, a time comes when silence is betrayal. How many churches have heard sermons on these texts since the terrorist atrocities of September 11? Where is the serious debate about what it means to confess Christ in a world of violence? Does Christian "realism" mean resigning ourselves to an endless future of "pre-emptive wars"? Does it mean turning a blind eye to torture and massive civilian casualties? Does it mean acting out of fear and resentment rather than intelligence and restraint?

Faithfully confessing Christ is the church's task, and never more so than when its confession is co-opted by militarism and nationalism.

- A "theology of war," emanating from the highest circles of American government, is seeping into our churches as well.
- The language of "righteous empire" is employed with growing frequency.
- The roles of God, church, and nation are confused by talk of an American "mission" and "divine appointment" to "rid the world of evil."

The security issues before our nation allow no easy solutions. No one has a monopoly on the truth. But a policy that rejects the wisdom of international consultation should not be baptized by religiosity. The danger today is political idolatry exacerbated by the politics of fear.

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**In this time of crisis, we need a new confession of Christ.**

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**1.** Jesus Christ, as attested in Holy Scripture, knows no national boundaries. Those who confess his name are found throughout the earth. Our allegiance to Christ takes priority over national identity. Whenever Christianity compromises with empire, the gospel of Christ is discredited.

*We reject the false teaching that any nation-state can ever be described with the words, "the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it." These words, used in scripture, apply only to Christ. No political or religious leader has the right to twist them in the service of war.*

**2.** Christ commits Christians to a strong presumption against war. The wanton destructiveness of modern warfare strengthens this obligation. Standing in the shadow of the Cross, Christians have a responsibility to count the cost, speak out for the victims, and explore every alternative before a nation goes to war. We are committed to international cooperation rather than unilateral policies.

*We reject the false teaching that a war on terrorism takes precedence over ethical and legal norms. Some things ought never be done—torture, the deliberate bombing of civilians, the use of indiscriminate weapons of mass destruction—regardless of the consequences.*

**3.** Christ commands us to see not only the splinter in our adversary's eye, but also the beam in our own. The distinction between good and evil does not run between one nation and another, or one group and another. It runs straight through every human heart.

*We reject the false teaching that America is a "Christian nation," representing only virtue, while its adversaries are nothing but vicious. We reject the belief that America has nothing to repent of, even as we reject that it represents most of the world's evil. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23).*

**4.** Christ shows us that enemy-love is the heart of the gospel. While we were yet enemies, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8, 10). We are to show love to our enemies even as we believe God in Christ has shown love to us and the whole world. Enemy-love does not mean capitulating to hostile agendas or domination. It does mean refusing to demonize any human being created in God's image.

*We reject the false teaching that any human being can be defined as outside the law's protection. We reject the demonization of perceived enemies, which only paves the way to abuse; and we reject the mistreatment of prisoners, regardless of supposed benefits to their captors.*

**5.** Christ teaches us that humility is the virtue befitting forgiven sinners. It tempers all political disagreements, and it allows that our own political perceptions, in a complex world, may be wrong.

*We reject the false teaching that those who are not for the United States politically are against it or that those who fundamentally question American policies must be with the "evil-doers." Such crude distinctions, especially when used by Christians, are expressions of the Manichaean heresy, in which the world is divided into forces of absolute good and absolute evil.*

**T**he Lord Jesus Christ is either authoritative for Christians, or he is not. His Lordship cannot be set aside by any earthly power. His words may not be distorted for propagandistic purposes. No nation-state may usurp the place of God.

We believe that acknowledging these truths is indispensable for followers of Christ. We urge them to remember these principles in making their decisions as citizens. Peacemaking is central to our vocation in a troubled world where Christ is Lord. ■

## Other

### Worship Resources

A Moravian Service of Peace  
(*Singstunde*, a living Moravian  
tradition):

[www.elca.org/decm/worship/peace/pri  
nt/moravian\\_singstunde.html](http://www.elca.org/decm/worship/peace/pri<br/>nt/moravian_singstunde.html)

A Service of Communion for Peace  
from the Evangelical Lutheran Church  
in America:

[www.elca.org/dcm/worship/peace/prin  
t/elca\\_holy\\_communion.html](http://www.elca.org/dcm/worship/peace/prin<br/>t/elca_holy_communion.html)

An Interfaith Service for Peace (Palm  
Sunday/Passover Liturgy) from the  
Philadelphia Area Interfaith Peace  
Network:

[http://www.shalomctr.org/index.cfm/a  
ction/read/section/Abe/article/article7  
76.html](http://www.shalomctr.org/index.cfm/a<br/>ction/read/section/Abe/article/article7<br/>76.html)

A Variety of Worship Resources from  
the Presbyterian Peacemaking  
Program:

[http://www.pcusa.org/iraq/worshipres  
ources.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/iraq/worshipres<br/>ources.htm)

## Contact us!

If you have questions or comments  
about this tool kit—or are seeking  
further advice about organizing a  
vigil—please e-mail Sojourners at  
[organize@sojo.net](mailto:organize@sojo.net).

To find a vigil that has already been  
organized in your area, click here:

[http://hq.demaction.org/Sojo/event/n  
ationalEventSearch.jsp?national\\_event  
\\_KEY=9](http://hq.demaction.org/Sojo/event/n<br/>ationalEventSearch.jsp?national_event<br/>_KEY=9)

To host a vigil in your area, click here:

[http://hq.demaction.org/Sojo/event/n  
ationalEventSignup.jsp?national\\_event  
\\_KEY=9](http://hq.demaction.org/Sojo/event/n<br/>ationalEventSignup.jsp?national_event<br/>_KEY=9)

[www.sojo.net](http://www.sojo.net)