

BOLDLY LIVING INTO OUR JUST PEACE IDENTITY
Resolution Passed June 10, 2007
by the 2007 Annual Meeting of the Minnesota Conference
United Church of Christ

*Only the “Be It Resolved” statements were voted upon by the Annual Meeting.
The Summary, Theological Rationale, Background and Whereas sections were neither voted upon nor approved.*

SUMMARY

Calling UCC local churches and all settings of the Minnesota Conference to more fully live out our Just Peace identity. Calling Christians to confront governmental abuses of human rights and democratic process, and to promote authentic global security by means of advocacy and service. See Matthew 5: 1-16.

THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE

The principles of a Just Peace theology are detailed in the 1986 book by a United Church of Christ team, [A Just Peace Church](#).

1. God’s move to bond with us in friendship opens up the possibility that such friendship is possible on earth.
2. Humanity finds ways to refuse the shalom vision and to turn away from God’s will for human history. Too often what is kept is not peace, but injustice and greed.
3. Jesus is our peace. Christ’s power becomes tangible through our bonding with one another. The church is thus a real countervailing power to those forces that perpetuate human enmity.
4. The work of the Spirit includes a genuine effort at making right what has been wrong.
5. Through the grace made present to humanity by the Holy Spirit, we are all enabled to recognize the human possibility genuinely available for constructing our world on the principles of justice.
6. A state ought to be based on consent rather than coercion. The church has the responsibility to confront the state on issues that diminish the human community.
7. The church offers hope in the love of peace, springing from a thirst for love, justice, and equality for all people.

BACKGROUND

Since 2003 U.S. military have been directly engaged in Iraq under the justification of pre-emptive war to preclude a now unsubstantiated threat. No weapons of mass destruction were found in Iraq, and it has been concluded there was no Al Qaeda connection prior to the US invasion of Iraq. Thousands of lives have been lost and no one can give a legal reason why.

The United States is currently engaged by proxy in various other foreign armed conflicts, and has a military presence at hundreds of established bases in foreign countries. To staff a voluntary force of over 2 million men and women, our military recruits disproportionately members of low-income and marginalized communities, including women as well as men of color. The impact of military employment and paychecks with benefits on rural and urban communities can be positive, but the impact on the community of trauma, injury, higher post-combat assault rates, mental illness and substance abuse problems is not positive. These outcomes disproportionately impact communities in poverty. Meanwhile resources for returning Veterans, support services for families of GIs and especially Guard units are underfunded. Extended tours have put families, employers, schools and municipalities – especially fire and police units – under extreme stress.

A just war has certain criteria: just cause, right intention, proper authority, be a last resort, be waged in proportion, protect non-combatants, and have probability of success. Activities of war and occupation that cannot be shown to meet these criteria must be opposed by Christians in all humility and courage.

WHEREAS

- Our children and friends in the Minnesota National Guard, Active Duty and Reserve Units of US military are serving extended tours of combat duty in conflicts which do not satisfy the criteria of a “just war”
- Death rates and numbers of severely injured and traumatized soldiers continue to grow
- Our churches and related entities are called to serve those who return from military service bearing extreme psychological pain and moral trauma, as well as life-altering injuries and personal and family stress
- We believe that to take a stand against unjust war is a way to support women and men in active military service
- We do not understand what it would mean to “win” this war
- We deplore the suffering of Iraqi civilians and soldiers, and the destruction of the land where, according to our sacred story, human history began
- We cannot condone the actions of our government that violate human rights and detain suspects as prisoners, indefinitely and without legal recourse, whether at Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo, “secret” prisons in Europe and Central Asia, or along the U.S.-Mexico border
- Our General Synod has affirmed: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (numerous); civil liberties (numerous); a Just Peace Pronouncement (1985); Support for the Men and Women of Our Armed Forces (1991); and a Peace With Justice Movement (2003)
- Our Minnesota Conference affirmed that we are a Just Peace Conference (1993)

BE IT RESOLVED

1. Just Peace churches in our conference are urged to form task forces (or other action groups) to work with Conference staff as below, to end the current unjust war in Iraq and prevent subsequent unjust wars
2. The Minnesota Conference commits itself, beginning immediately, to include in the position portfolios of its ministerial staff attention to the following and report back to the Annual Meeting
 - offer to clergy and congregations study and training opportunities concerning our national history of war and peace, democracy and poverty, and our Christian tradition's resources for more peace, less war
 - provide forums to discuss the teachings and practices of Jesus concerning peace-making
 - facilitate dialogue in our churches concerning issues of faith and the common good
 - offer liturgical, programmatic and educational resources for peacemaking and varieties of conflict resolution in congregations
 - offer training opportunities for congregations to learn how to support returning veterans and families of military personnel
 - support Just Peace congregations as well as congregations who may consider becoming Just Peace/Peace with Justice congregations
 - offer Conference youth training and education on just war criteria, conscientious objection, peace ethics and alternative service
 - affirm and celebrate Pilgrim Point as a resource for training peacemakers in our Conference
 - together with the Justice & Witness Team, communicate with member congregations about legislation that will impact current wars as well as care of returning Veterans
 - encourage UCC members to speak out within the democratic political process and also to engage in direct action to nonviolently confront injustice
 - network with, and receive information and reflection from, UCC military chaplains as well as other members in uniform, including through "blogs" and other electronic means of communication
 - encourage partnerships for peace-making with ecumenical, interfaith and secular organizations
3. All congregations of our Conference are urged to take actions to protect United States constitutional rights to due process, and to stop the United States government's use of torture or degrading treatment of human beings, and to support every effort for the protection of human and civil rights.
4. All congregations in our Conference are urged to pray for peace as a regular individual and corporate discipline, and to include liturgy of confession of participation in violence
5. All congregations in our Conference are urged to expand pastoral care to the homeless and to residents of correctional facilities, whose ranks swell with disenfranchised veterans during and after a time of war