

THE WAYS THAT LEAD TO PEACE**OPTIONS**

Delegates to GC 2008 will be asked to vote on petitions that call for an end to the U.S. occupation of Iraq, withdrawal of all U.S. troops, commitment of funds for the rebuilding of Iraq and provision of adequate funding for returning military personnel and their families. A petition from the Global Young People's Convocation and Legislative Assembly reminds us that young people are the ones most affected by war and they are asking that the church empower all young people to work for peace. Two petitions, including one from MFSA, ask the delegates to remove the "just war" language in paragraph 165C and return the church to the historic and unconditional position of the Methodist and United Brethren Churches that war is incompatible with the teachings and example of Christ.

ISSUE

At issue is whether the UMC will speak a prophetic word of peace to our nation and the world about ending the invasion and occupation of Iraq, supporting our troops and families with care and services as they return home, and working diligently, especially with young people, to prevent future wars.

ANALYSIS

In November of 2005, ninety-six bishops of the United Methodist Church issued, "A Call to Repentance and Peace with Justice" in which they acknowledged complicity in what they believed to be the unjust and immoral invasion and occupation of Iraq and confessed "our preoccupation with institutional enhancement and limited agendas while American men and women are sent to Iraq to kill and be killed, while thousands of Iraqi people needlessly suffer and die, while poverty increases and preventable diseases go untreated."

Now more than 4,000 men and women have lost their lives in this conflict along with estimated Iraqi deaths surpassing one million. Another 40,000 US military personnel have been wounded sufficiently to require medical air transport. Yet the war continues with no date set for an end to the conflict. Wounded men and women return home to inadequate care and support.

As followers of Jesus we can never give our blessing to war. No matter how much reason tells us that –in any given situation – war is the lesser evil of all choices before us, we cannot give our blessing. In an age when many nations possess weapons of mass destruction that can end all human life on the planet, war can no longer be considered a valid means of resolving conflict. We reject war as an instrument of national foreign policy and especially reject preemptive first strikes.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

(Please note: the 165.C petitions are grouped at the end of page 3)

Vote for:

- **Petition #80038-C1-R999**, p. 266, "Iraq War" from Dakotas Annual Conference takes sections from Bishop's Resolution urges congress to come up with plan to end war in Iraq, calls for rebuilding of Iraq, calls United Methodists to pray for peace.

- **Petition #80259-C1-R9999**, p. 269, “Young People’s Statement on War and Peace” from GBOD for Global Young People’s Convocation and Legislative Assembly stating they are among those most affected by war and empower all young people to work for peace.
- **Petition #80408-C1-R9999**, p. 270, “Crimes Against Humanity, Genocide, and War Crimes” from GBGM, new resolution, questions just war asking how and who will determine last resort and decide on war, concerned about killings in Philippines and failure to protect, calls on UMC to respond to social injustices, use resources as global connectional church to involve ourselves in situation, raise awareness and send fact finding missions to Philippines.
- **Petition #80533-C1-R9999**, p. 283, “War and Peace with Iran, North Korea and the World” from California-Nevada Annual Conference resolves that UMC call upon US President and Administration to pursue peace-making strategies with particular focus on Iran and North Korea.
- **Petition #80612-C1-R329**, p. 261, “Nuclear-Free Pacific” from GBCS urges UMC to affirm commitment to nuclear-free Pacific, oppose and condemn use of Pacific for developing, testing, transport and disposal of nuclear waste.
- **Petition #80613-C1-R335**, p. 262, Support for Land Mine Treaty” from GBCS adds calling upon all countries that have not done so to ratify Landmine Treaty, for GBCS to advocate against deployment of landmines and resolution to be sent to US President and Congress as soon as possible GC ends.
- **Petition #80614-C1-R337**, p. 262, “Peace in Iraq” from GBCS asks GC to call upon US government to develop and implement plan for troop withdrawal from Iraq, work with other nations to rebuild Iraq, provide funding for US military personnel returning from Iraq and their families.
- **Petition #80615-C1-R338**, p. 263, “The UMC and Peace”, from GBCS amends resolution 338, to includes banning development of landmines, dirty bombs and cluster bombs in treaties, incorporates language from Council of Bishops study “In Search of Security”.
- **Petition #80798-C1-R9999**, p. 295, “Establish US Department of Peace and Nonviolence” from Pacific Northwest Annual Conference for GC to endorse establishment of a US Department of Peace and Nonviolence as a cabinet level department.
- **Petition #80802-C1-R9999**, p. 295, “The War in Iraq and the War on Terrorism” from Wisconsin Annual Conference adds new resolution to oppose actions of US Government in conduction war in Iraq and war on terrorism and calls on US to begin orderly and phased withdrawal.
- **Petition #80980-C1-164.I**, p. 193, “Military Service” from Howard Hallman seeks return to historic position of church that war is incompatible with teachings and example of Christ, replaces “just war” language with spiritual reference to Jesus’ on loving our enemies and rejecting use of violence.
- **Petition #81111-C1-R9999**, p. 307, “Guantanamo Bay” from Detroit Annual Conference adds resolution for GC to ask US President and Congress to try or release detainees without delay and thereafter close the Guantanamo Bay detention facility.
- **Petition #81150-C1-R9999**, p. 308, In Support of “A Call to Repentance and Peace with Justice” from Brad Hunt, calls for GC to endorse bishop’s statement, confess failure to teach and witness about issues related to war and peace, pledges to work tirelessly for no more war.
- **Petition #81346-C1-R9999**, p. 312, “End the U. S. War and Occupation in Iraq” from MFSA, adds resolution about withdrawing troops from Iraq, acceptance of displaced Iraqis displaced by war, increased support for veterans, copy of resolution to administration.

- **Petition #80561-C2-R66**, p. 362, “Child Soldiers” from GBCS to work with international organizations to ban use of child soldiers, urge governments to sign UN covenants, promote and advocate for funding to Central Conferences to rehabilitate former child soldiers.
- **Petition #80722-C2-R78**, p. 363, from GBGM seeks to retain resolution #78 “Prejudice Against Muslims and Arabs in the U.S.A.”. This resolution calls, in the spirit of love for God and our neighbors, UM boards, agencies, and institutions to provide resources and programs that increase our knowledge of and support for our Arab and Muslim brothers and sisters.
- **Petition #80443-D1-NonDis**, p. 616 “War and Peace Study Material” directs the GBOD to inform youth and adults about theological issues surrounding war and peace.
- **Petition #81106-GA-NonDis** p. 985 “JustPeace” asks for continued funding for the JustPeace Center for Mediation and Conflict Transformation.
- **Petition #80090-GM-R126** p. 1101 “Communities of Shalom” asks the UMC to recognize, affirm, and celebrate the Shalom initiative and support this ministry through prayer, advocacy, and the Advance giving.
- **Petition #80414-GM-R9999** p.1138 “Abolition of Torture” from GBGM calls upon the UMC to continue to publicly condemn and oppose torture and work actively within our churches, governments, and in partnership with international organizations to abolish torture and “love our neighbors” even in the midst of a “war on terror.”
- **Petition #80844-SU-NonDis** p. 1560 “Guidance of Our Bishops” requests that the Council of Bishops revisit “The Bishop’s Call For Peace and the Development of Peoples” and “In Defense of Creation” and issue a pastoral message and study guide in light of the new realities in which we live.

Petitions related to Paragraph 165.C

There following four petitions seek to amend parts of Paragraph 165.C “War and Peace.” Two petitions take out the clause about “war as a last resort” and return to the historic UMC position of responding peacefully to conflicts, a position MFSA supports. The other two petitions make positive additions but leave in “war as a last resort.” The petitions are:

- **Petition #81240-C1-165.C**, p. 196, from MFSA deletes the “war as last resort” clause. In the next sentence, a clause is inserted about working together to resolve conflict by peaceful means.
- **Petition #80981-C1-165.C**, p. 195, from Methodists United for Peace with Justice, deletes the “war as last resort” clause and substitutes scriptures of being called to love our enemies, rejecting violence, seeking justice and serving as reconcilers of conflict. A second addition adds strengthening of international treaties and framework for responding to aggression, terrorism and genocide.
- **Petition #80640-C1-165.C**, p. 195, from GBCS, adds opposing unilateral first/preemptive strike actions and strategies on the part of any government.
- **Petition # 81206-C1-165.C**, p. 195, from Kirkland Reynolds and two similar petitions, adds registration of human-made objects in outer space and condemning of weapons for use in outer space.

MFSA recommends that delegates revise paragraph 165C using language suggested in the above amendments so the final version is strengthened and makes clear that the clause, “*to be employed only as a last resort in prevention of such evils as genocide, brutal suppression of human rights, and unprovoked national aggression*” is removed and the suggested additions are included.