



THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

May 16, 2007

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Members of Congress:

In October of 2002 we, the bishops of the Episcopal Church, wrote to Congress expressing our belief that going to war with Iraq was not justified, noting that "the wisdom of our own Christian faith, as well as other religious traditions, teaches us to demonstrate the greatest prudence and caution when the lethal force of war is contemplated."

We offered our prayers and support as Congress made "this difficult decision, not just for our country, but also for the people of Iraq and the peace of the world." We noted that we respected "the seriousness of your responsibility to protect the lives of our citizens" and we condemned "the brutality of Saddam Hussein and his regime." We included prayers for "members of the armed services and their families in the midst of international crisis and possible military action."

Now we write again to express our deepest concern for the situation in Iraq and for our servicemen and women. We are filled with sorrow as we witness how our worst fears of what might ensue from war in Iraq become reality. Families and communities have been broken both in body and in spirit as service members are separated from their families for extraordinary periods of time, suffer mounting casualties, and all with no end of violence in sight. The respect our nation once enjoyed and our relations with allies have been seriously undermined.

As Congress and the Administration consider the future of Iraq, we urge a careful and reasoned debate that avoids the partisan and harsh rhetoric that would diminish the important issues before our nation. That debate did not occur in 2002 and, with the notable exception of the Iraq Study Group, it is only marginally occurring now. For the sake of all those involved, and to honor those brave women and men who have been maimed and lost, we encourage full and open discussion that acknowledges our mistakes as well as our responsibilities. It is our hope that this discussion will lead to policies that will end the violence in Iraq and bring stability and a just peace to the region.

We believe it imperative that the United States now:

- Map out a strategy for a responsible transition to Iraqi governance, making clear that we do not have long term interests in occupying Iraq
- Join those in the region, including Syria and Iran, in seeking security and economic recovery for Iraq
- Provide the women and men of our military and their families with the sustained and responsive care they need
- Work for religious freedom and protection of religious minorities in Iraq
- Serve the needs of Iraqi refugees wherever they may be
- Seek peace in the region, including a two-state solution between Israelis and Palestinians

In the Episcopal Church's Book of Common Prayer, we ask that the spirit of wisdom be given to those whom we entrust with the authority of government; with that authority comes great responsibility. We pray that the spirit of wisdom will be with each of you and help guide us to a just and lasting peace.

Sincerely,

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