

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), through the Office on the Middle East, the Iraq Partnership Network, and other programs, continues to lift up the plight of Iraqi refugees and displaced persons. Through the Peace Fund for Solidarity with the Churches of Iraq (Extra Commitment Opportunity account #E051722) and the Jinishian Memorial Program, the PC(USA) has also assisted the churches of the region, through the Middle East Council of Churches, as they address this crisis.

The GAC supports the call to the United States government to alleviate the suffering of Iraqi refugees. Part of that effort could involve working with other nations, particularly Iraq, and supporting the work of the Office of the UN high commissioner for refugees and other agencies.

Item 11-10

[The assembly approved Item 11-10 as amended. See pp. 45–46.]

On Building Peace in Iraq—From the Presbytery of Baltimore.

The Presbytery of Baltimore overtures the 218th General Assembly (2008) to do the following:

1. Pray, in a spirit of deep [~~sorrow and confession~~] [humility], for God's justice and peace to prevail in Iraq; and recognizing and heeding God's call to love all persons as made in God's own image, and even to pray for our enemies, encourage all Presbyterians to be in intentional and regular prayer for everyone in and of Iraq; for Iraqi civilians, Christian, Muslim, Jew, Yezidi; for soldiers and armed actors; for the refugees and the displaced; for the tortured and their torturers; and for insurgents, kidnapers, and terrorists, for all are God's beloved, all are in need of the transformation of God's love and God's peace.

2. Commend and thank the peacemakers who have worked nonviolently to end the war in Iraq through prayers, vigils, and acts of resistance and witness such as the actions organized by the Christian Peace Witness for Iraq; and encourage all Presbyterians to participate enthusiastically in peacemaking efforts to end the occupation of Iraq.

3. Commend and thank members of the armed forces, and their loved ones, for their service and sacrifice.

4. Call upon the United States government to support our military personnel by granting speedy discharges to conscientious objectors; fully funding veterans' benefits; ensuring that injured service personnel and veterans have the best medical, mental health, and rehabilitation care available; and providing generous benefits to surviving family members.

5. [~~Call upon the government of the United States to end its military presence in Iraq by withdrawing all troops, hired soldiers, and contractors, and permanently closing all military bases in Iraq.~~] [Call upon the United States government to develop and implement a lasting peaceful solution, responsibly bring the troops home, and reaffirm the call of the 216th General Assembly (2004) for the United States government to engage with the international community through the United Nations and other international agencies to cooperate with the government of Iraq in providing security, peacekeeping forces, and funding the rebuilding of the country.]

6. Call upon the United States and all member states of the United Nations to establish and fully fund a United Nations peacebuilding mission for Iraq to work in partnership with Iraqi leaders, neighboring nations, and appropriate international governmental and nongovernmental organizations to establish security in Iraq, rebuild institutions and infrastructure, resettle and assist refugees, and initiate a process of truth and reconciliation to promote healing and forgiveness.

7. Call upon the United States and other responsible nations to voluntarily make restitution in an amount adequate to repair war damage; to fully investigate, and where appropriate, in accordance with the principles of due process recognized in U.S. and international law, to prosecute all charges of war crimes including torture and mistreatment of prisoners; and to cooperate completely with any international investigations of war crimes committed by any party to the conflict in Iraq.

8. Call upon the United States to remove all weapons, mines, depleted uranium, and other military waste products from Iraq; to repair other damage to the environment, including priceless archaeological sites.

9. Call upon the United States to return full direct control of Iraq's oil resources and oil revenues to Iraq.

10. Direct the Stated Clerk to communicate this action to the president of the United States, members of the U.S. Congress, and the secretary-general of the United Nations.

[11. Receive the study paper (as found in Item 11-24), “To Repent, Restore, Rebuild, and Reconcile” and direct that it be posted on the Website of the Office of the General Assembly and be commended for study throughout the church.]

[12. Commend to the church the call of the 216th General Assembly (2004) for the church to express its pastoral concern for and offer pastoral care to members of the United States armed forces serving their country in the war in Iraq and their families as well as for veterans of the war who have returned home (Iraq: Our Responsibility and the Future, Minutes, 2004, Part I, pp. 864ff).]

[13. Direct the General Assembly Council to continue to expand the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)’s commitment to relief efforts in Iraq in cooperation with our ecumenical partners, to ministries that address human needs in Iraq caused by the war, and to long-term development efforts to assist in the rebuilding of the country.]

[14. Call upon all presbyteries, congregations, and members within the PC(USA) to intentionally, personally, and concretely work to bring healing, peace, justice, and care to all affected by the war in Iraq, not only through our prayers but through the giving of our resources, time, money, and very selves to improve the lives and future of all involved, especially the hurting, the poor, the oppressed, and those whose lives have been damaged by the war.]

[15. Pray for, call for, and work for a just and peaceful future for the nation and people of Iraq, which includes the establishing of a just, stable, and democratic government and the timely departure of U.S. military forces and their contractors as soon as it is possible to leave the nation in an appropriately stable, just, and self-sustaining form.]

Rationale

Most of the sixth chapter of the book of Luke is dedicated to Jesus’ teachings about the act of courage that it will take to strive for right relationships even with our enemies or those who hate us. Toward the end of the chapter, Luke recounts Jesus’ exasperation with his followers, “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I tell you? I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, hears my words, and acts on them” (Luke 6: 46–47). The call to act on Jesus’ radical notion of security based on loving one’s enemies is clear.

In the two thousand years since the time of Jesus, Christians have often wrestled with these difficult teachings of Jesus. The ethical questions regarding how we respond to evil have always been difficult, and people of good will and solid faith conviction have often disagreed with one another. Still, Jesus’ words remain, beckoning us into an act of faith that challenges us to defy our deepest fears.

In *Peacemaking: The Believers’ Calling*, the 192nd General Assembly (1980) declared, “The church is faithful to Christ when it is engaged in peacemaking. . . . To deny our calling is a disservice to the church and the world.” Although a just resolution to the conflict in Iraq requires finding solutions to complex and challenging problems, we accept our responsibility to be advocates for nonviolence and reconciliation as those solutions are developed and implemented.

Fortunately, some consensus has begun to emerge from qualified groups studying strategies for ending the war and occupation in Iraq. The first, and most important, conclusion is that the U.S. military operations in Iraq have failed to provide security for citizens and have motivated an extremely violent civil-war-like conflict, and therefore must be ended. This overture includes suggestions from the proposals of several of these groups: “Towards Peace in and with Iraq,” from The Transnational Foundation for Peace and Future Research (www.transnational.org); “The Iraq Study Group Report: The Way Forward—A New Approach,” from the United States Institute of Peace (www.usip.org); “Pastoral Message on the War in Iraq,” from The General Assembly of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA (www.nccusa.org); and “Iraq: Our Responsibility and the Future,” from the 216th General Assembly (2004) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (available with other excellent resources at www.pcusa.org/peacemaking/iraq/).

Two groups of people deserve the special concern of the General Assembly: the civilian population of Iraq and U.S. military personnel and their families. This overture takes the position that the best leadership for the Iraqi people is an elected government free of any U.S. influence and that the best channel for international assistance is the United Nations. The problems of adequately equipping our troops and providing the best medical care for the injured have been well covered in the U.S. press. A good exploration of the mental health problems caused by long and uncertain deployments, insufficient rest, and prolonged exposure to combat may be found in the May 2007 Pentagon mental health survey of troops in Iraq.

Many Presbyterians have been called to the work of peacemaking in this time of war. Christian Peace Witness for Iraq (CPWI) is a network of Christian churches and organizations that coordinates national and local actions that incorporate

spirituality with public witness. Rick Ufford-Chase, a former Moderator of the PC(USA), and other Presbyterians are part of the CPWI leadership team. The CPWI has organized worship services, public vigils and fasts, and nonviolent direct actions to give voice to its message: end the U.S. war and occupation, support our troops, support an Iraqi-led peace process, say NO to torture, and say YES to justice. More information on the Christian Peace Witness for Iraq may be found on its Website, christianpeacewitness.org and on the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship website, www.presbypeacefellowship.org.

Concurrence to Item 11-10 from the Presbyteries of Chicago, Santa Fe, and the Twin Cities Area.

ACSWP ADVICE AND COUNSEL ON ITEM 11-10

Advice and Counsel on Item 11-10—From the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP).

Item 11-10 from the Presbytery of Baltimore, with concurrences from the Presbytery of Chicago, the Presbytery of Santa Fe, and the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area, requests that the 218th General Assembly (2008) pray for peace and justice in Iraq; encourage all Presbyterians to be in intentional and regular prayer for everyone in Iraq; commend and thank the peace-makers who have worked nonviolently to end the war in Iraq; commend the members of the armed forces and their families for their service and sacrifice; and, call upon the U.S. government to end its military presence in Iraq and fully fund a UN peacebuilding mission for Iraq.

The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) advises that Item 11-10 be approved with the following amendment to Recommendation 6: [Text to be deleted is shown with brackets and with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown with brackets and with an underline.]

“6. Call upon the United States and ~~[all]~~ member states of the United Nations to ~~[establish and fully fund a United Nations peacebuilding mission for Iraq to work in partnership with Iraqi leaders, neighboring nations, and appropriate international governmental and nongovernmental organizations to establish security in Iraq, rebuild institutions and infrastructure, resettle and assist refugees, and initiate a process of truth and reconciliation to promote healing and forgiveness]~~ [place Iraq on the agenda of the UN Peacebuilding Commission at the earliest opportunity in order to encourage sustainable peace, security, and development by rebuilding institutions and infrastructure, resettling and assisting refugees and internally displaced persons, and initiating a process of truth and reconciliation that promotes healing and forgiveness].”

Rationale

Item 11-10 is consistent with the General Assembly policies such as the *Resolution on Just Peacemaking and the Call for International Intervention for Humanitarian Rescue* (Minutes, 1998, Part I, pp. 74–75, 455–59). Many of the recommendations here are similar to those in the proposed resolution, “Costly Lessons of the Iraq War,” which also provides a teaching resource, while this focuses on the advocacy of the church. Parts of Recommendations 4 (on Conscientious Objectors: see item X), 7 (specifying “war crimes” prosecution), 8 (specifying weapons and military waste removal and archeological restoration), 9 (specifying control of oil) add to the more general and comprehensive recommendations in the resolution. Item 6 is rephrased in conformity with current UN assignment of responsibilities as noted below.

In response to a growing recognition that international peacebuilding efforts have lacked an overall strategic approach and coherence, world leaders at the 2005 World Summit agreed to establish the Peacebuilding Commission (UN General Assembly resolution 60/1). The Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) is an intergovernmental advisory body of the United Nations that supports peace efforts in countries emerging from conflict.

The Peacebuilding Commission plays a unique role in (1) bringing together all of the relevant actors, including international donors, the international financial institutions, national governments, troop contributing countries; (2) marshalling resources; and (3) advising on and proposing integrated strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery and, where appropriate, highlighting any gaps that threaten to undermine peace.

Peacebuilding is a long-term process that occurs after violent conflict has come to a halt. Peacebuilding initiatives cannot substitute for peacekeeping or peacemaking efforts, but must be planned for sequentially out of hope and in the promise of God’s shalom.

9. *Peacemaking: A Believer's Calling*

We live in a time of kairos

when humanity stands on the border of a promised time,
when God's people are summoned to obedience and faithfulness

to preserve God's creation,

to stand with the poor and oppressed everywhere, and
to stand together as the people of the earth;

when with confession and with humility we repent of
our blindness to the division and war in our own hearts
and in our own land,

our obsession with money and our pursuit of power,
our irrational belief in security through weaponry, and
our worship of secular gods.

We are called

to be obedient to Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace,
who loves the whole world and
who invites us to be stewards of the earth and servants of his people,
to be co-workers in the new Creation.

Let us be peacemakers.

Let us be called the children of God,
speaking boldly with moral conviction to the nation and to the world,
building, with God's grace, a new moral order in the world community; and
acting now for world peace, an enterprise of justice, an outcome of love.

10. *Conclusion*

"Enough is enough. No more words without deeds. It is time for action." This was the message that Christians in Palestine and Israel delivered to the WCC International Peace Conference "Churches Together for Peace and Justice in the Middle East" held in Amman, Jordan, in June 2007. "Risk the curses and abuse that will be aimed at you and stand in solidarity with us and with our Palestinian brothers and sisters of all faiths...."

Our church provided great hope to many Christians, Jews, and Muslims in the Middle East when we began a process of corporate engagement with American companies profiting from the occupation. After four years, corporate engagement with Caterpillar and Motorola has produced no results. If we fail to take the next step of actual divestment, we lose credibility and dash the hopes of those who languish under Israel's oppressive military occupation. Now is the time to divest from these two companies.

ACSWP ADVICE AND COUNSEL ON ITEM 11-23

Advice and Counsel on Items 11-23—From the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP).

The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) advises that the recommendations of Item 11-23 be answered by the action taken on 11-01.

Item 11-24

[The assembly answered Item 11-24 by the action taken on Item 11-10. See pp. 46, 47.]

Costly Lessons of the Iraq War: Resolution with Recommendations and Study Paper—From the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy

The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy recommends that the 218th General Assembly (2008) approve the resolution and recommendations, "Costly Lessons of the Iraq War," and receive the study paper, "To Repent, Restore, Rebuild, and Reconcile."

Resolution: Costly Lessons of the Iraq War

Introduction

This resolution is accompanied by the study paper, “To Repent, Restore, Rebuild, and Reconcile.” This resolution summarizes the theological grounding and position of the church, raises open questions about important matters of context, puts forward “lessons learned” from the Iraq conflict, and makes recommendations for both pastoral and prophetic response. The sheer number of deaths (estimates from 100,000–1,000,000 Iraqi; 4,250 U.S. combat; 307 allied coalition; 1,000 U.S. contractor, est.), an unknown number of civilians and approximately 29,000 U.S. wounded, the destruction of the physical, cultural, and civic bases of Iraqi society, and vast expenditure of U.S. funds (approximately \$600 billion, not counting long term health and reconstruction costs and relatively limited Coalition funds), are each grievous moral challenges.¹ With the additional losses to U.S. national purpose, credibility, and reputation, all make it impossible for the church to keep silent. At the same time, recognizing that the tragic pattern of military intervention going back well before Vietnam has continued in the post-Cold War period, the recommendations section includes several long-range proposals for Presbyterian and ecumenical peacemaking witness.

The pursuit of “social righteousness” inevitably calls the church to serve as conscience in society. Just as the Holy Spirit speaks to our moral sense, convicting us of sin and drawing us to the good, so the example and witness of the church point to the way of Christ. That path of discipleship is rooted in salvation, demonstrated in love, and experienced as fullness of life. In communities of any size, that way of love is expressed in justice, and justice itself is a linchpin of peace. In the Reformed tradition, the non-violent peace of Jesus does not rule out all protective uses of force, but Jesus’ reign stands against all forms of domination. In Gethsemane, Jesus warns that those who live by the sword will die by it; in Colossians, the victory of the cross and resurrection reveals the “powers” or false gods of the world to be exposed and disarmed.

The church’s position as described below is neither pursuit of an unclear victory (“stay the course”) nor immediate withdrawal (“cut and run.”) As the study document affirms, even though the U.S. invasion was effected without adequate planning or international legitimacy, the U.S. should not withdraw in the same unilateral manner, without taking into account its continuing moral responsibilities for the condition of Iraq. Nor, above all, should the United States respond to the ironic strengthening of Iranian and Shiite influence in Iraq and elsewhere by another unilateral bombing or invasion, especially since the 2007 National Intelligence Estimate revealed the absence of an ongoing nuclear weapons program in Iran.

The position here proposed may be termed: Repent, Restore, Rebuild, and Reconcile. These goals are:

1. To repent of engaging in an unnecessary war, to express remorse for the suffering, and to change the disposition to exercise power without understanding the lasting effects of coercion on both occupying and occupied peoples.
2. To restore responsibility for sovereignty and security to Iraqi civil authorities bolstered as necessary by international troops under UN auspices, with U.S.-built bases contributed to the multilateral effort and control.
3. To rebuild a battered Iraq through serious, well-managed, and accountable foreign aid, including massive healthcare assistance for the wounded and maimed.
4. To reconcile political, ethnic, and religious groups through diplomatic and peace-building measures based in truth-seeking, mutual respect, and peace with neighbors, including the supervised return of as many as three million refugees from Syria, Jordan, and other area countries and two million who have been internally displaced.

Lessons from the Second Iraq War (March 20, 2003–)

In Luke 14:25ff, Jesus gives various images of the need to count the cost: in following Jesus himself, but also in building a tower or going to war, lest one not have the resources to complete the task. Jesus recommends that an outnumbered king sue for peace, and then changes images to suggest giving up everything to be a disciple. This is realism combined with a framework of repentance. In its prophetic work, the Church is not only called to tally and mourn the dead, Iraqi as well as American and British, soldier and civilian, terrorist and contractor. The church is also called to help society to do the moral math about the basic effectiveness of war and of relying on overwhelming military force and massive weapons sales to one-party regimes as the basis for a foreign policy. Drawing on both Christian ethical and pragmatic judgments, we draw these conclusions for future deliberation by General Assemblies, ecumenical and public bodies:

1. The consequences of the initiation of the second Iraq war by the Executive branch of the United States government reaffirm the Constitution’s wisdom of requiring that Congress declare war, and that only after the Just War/Just Peace criteria of just cause, legitimate authority, proportionality, protection of noncombatants, likelihood of greater peace and justice, and proactively exhausting all alternatives have been met. Preventive or preemptive wars violate international law and Just War

principles, particularly the criterion of “last resort,” as they involve the unilateral choice of one nation or coalition to invade another before a last resort of defensive necessity is established.²

2. The Christian church, by distinguishing patriotism from nationalism, and refusing to be stampeded through fear of terror, thereby prevents the false demonization of other societies and the false sanctification of our own, defends the civil liberties guaranteed by the Bill of Rights, and maintains its own faithful resistance to idolatry and tyranny.

3. Unless United Nations peacekeeping forces are strengthened, or the UN authorizes humanitarian intervention, there can be no legitimate occupation, exploitation of resources by private companies, or exemption of military and contractors from civil or human rights law.

4. Democratic institutions cannot be imposed by violence on any people or nation. Democracy is not simply a matter of freedom but of “covenantal responsibility” based in equality before law and cannot be sustained in conditions of great inequality of power or wealth or physical security.

5. War requires a national consensus and can never be a regular act of governance. Without shared sacrifice through realistic taxation and other means, the human costs of war are borne by a limited sector of the population and the financial costs by borrowing, the first weakening the military and the second weakening the economy. Even humanitarian interventions approved by international authorities need to meet Just War/Just Peace criteria and be declared by the Congress of the United States of America.

6. a. Without effective civilian and judicial oversight, human rights violations will occur.

b. Without effective executive branch and congressional oversight, military contractors will profit from no-bid contracts and insufficient performance.

c. Even with cultural awareness and oversight by a free press, even temporary occupation oppresses the subject population.

7. Those parties and lobbies favoring war deserve particular scrutiny; with regard to targets in the Middle East, such as Iran, these parties would include military contractors, oil companies, other nations in the region, and civilian contractors that profit from occupation, security, and reconstruction.

8. “A superpower that insists on absolute security for itself makes all other nations insecure.”³ This affirms a realist argument for multilateral cooperation and “collective security” in an interdependent world where security interests transcend national boundaries.

9. The role of the United Nations as chief agent for multilateral cooperation would be enhanced by the existence of a significant NATO-like security alliance on each continent; rather than stretching NATO from the Balkans to Afghanistan, regional alliances, stronger than the African Union peacekeepers in Sudan for example, could help organize stabilizing international forces in places like Iraq.

10. The struggle against terrorism should return to the model of police work, as Britain has done, rather than be carried on as a “war.” “The police model views terrorists as criminals, refusing them the status of combatants,” and prosecutes them according to accepted traditions of international law, using techniques of detection and prevention rather than universal surveillance and indefinite detention.⁴

Recommendations

In light of the Gospel of peace and the lessons learned from the second Iraq war, the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy recommends that the 218th General Assembly (2008):

1. Approve this resolution and receive its study paper, and direct that both be posted for study and action on the Website of the Office of the General Assembly and be given limited printing for councils, peacemaking and educational programs, and educational institutions related to the church.

2. Encourage congregations and individual Presbyterians to continue praying for the people of Iraq and all occupation forces, particularly those who have been wounded or who have lost loved ones, and to support adequate healthcare and rehabilitation, including psychiatric care, for those affected.

3. Commend the Reformed principle that “God alone is Lord of the conscience,” and that in evaluating U.S. actions in Iraq every Presbyterian has the right to arrive at their own judgment, even if, after prayerful consideration, that places them in opposition to the position of the General Assembly.
4. Direct the General Assembly Council, through its Peacemaking Program and the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP), to convene a seminary- and college-wide review of peace studies and peacemaking opportunities appropriate to the major shifts needed in the approach of U.S. international relations, and to report the results of this study to the 220th General Assembly (2012).
5. Commend support for the UN Declaration of Human Rights on its sixtieth anniversary, the Geneva Conventions, and the International Criminal Court, and make widely known its conviction that all U.S. military and covert operations should comply with the highest human rights standards.
6. Urge the World Mission program of the General Assembly Council to offer material, moral, and spiritual support to the Presbyterians of Iraq, whether in country or in dispersion, in conjunction with regional ecumenical bodies, and urge the whole church to keep them in our prayers.
7. Direct the Office of Interfaith Relations, in cooperation with ecumenical partners and other offices of the General Assembly Council, and in addition to dialogue and study assignments, to participate in shared Muslim and Christian peace-making efforts and assist other efforts designed to improve understanding between these two families of faith, proposing public statements, worship events, and other actions as necessary between assemblies.
8. Direct the Office of the General Assembly, the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, the Presbyterian Washington and UN Offices, and other appropriate offices of the General Assembly Council, in conjunction with ecumenical partners, to communicate and advocate the following positions derived from this and other resolutions:
 - a. the swiftest possible internationalization of the occupation of Iraq under UN aegis, to improve security (removing U.S. troops as a focus of violence), prevent further religio-political cleansing, and assist return of refugees and persons internally displaced;
 - b. the provision of a truly generous reconstruction fund, to be administered under international auspices with full transparency and accountability, using internationally accepted standards for procurement, attention to human rights of recipients, and high environmental standards;
 - c. a full and honest accounting for the funds expended and to be expended upon on the war, including the costs of recruitment, rehabilitation, covert operations, and interest on debt;
 - d. a plan to conclude major military operations in a responsible and expeditious manner, leading to the withdrawal of virtually all U.S. forces and the international use for peace and reconstruction of fourteen bases built by U.S. contractors;
 - e. the tabulation of casualties among all parties and general inventory of destruction so that the human and material costs of the war may be assessed and the moral obligations of reconstruction and restitution be kept before the conscience of the nation;
 - f. the completion of investigations of intelligence failures, human rights abuses, and contractor scandals so that accountability may be restored to U.S. government agencies;
 - g. the significant increase of funding for United Nations, international development, and diplomatic operations and the corresponding decrease in the funding of the military, consistent with the development of “collective security” measures and the abandonment of the doctrines of “full spectrum dominance” and unilateral regime change;⁵
 - h. the re-adoption of the “police model” for dealing with international terror and the development of greater awareness and understanding in dealing with Muslim and Arab nations; and
 - i. a confirmation of the endorsement of congressional and judicial remedies for the use of all forms of torture (including waterboarding)⁶
9. Direct the Stated Clerk and ecumenically involved offices of the General Assembly Council to encourage consideration of a panel of peace and security experts on the model of the Commission on a Just and Durable Peace in the post-World War II period, funded by church and foundation sources, to foster the sharing of Christian peace understandings among church bodies and with policy makers in government, universities, and the private sector.

Rationale

A. The Grounding of the Position of the Presbyterian Church

As Christ's kingdom or reign cannot be gained by violence, so the Christian faith is not a religion of war and does not trust in violence to establish peace. The church's resistance to war has been expressed over the centuries in a minority commitment to pacifism, in the development of Just War doctrine, and more recently in proactive Just Peace thinking. Increasingly, biblical scholars recognize the place of nonviolent resistance in the New Testament, heightening the contrast between early Christianity and the Roman Empire. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and many other churches have supported the establishment of the United Nations and international laws to minimize the horrors of war and enlarge the concept of human rights. Based upon this historic Christian skepticism about war and empirical warnings heeded by many nations, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), most other ecumenical churches, and the Roman Catholic Church opposed the current Iraq war. This was done well before its vastly tragic and costly mismanagement and the steep decline in international respect for our country, out of a judgment that the administration was repudiating time-honored moral restraints on violence. The 216th General Assembly (2004), building on the concerns of the 215th General Assembly (2003) and a study of "*Religion, Violence, and Terrorism*," termed the Iraq war "unwise, illegal, and immoral."⁷ It urged that Iraqi sovereignty be restored and hence the occupation end as swiftly as possible, a position that was held unchanged by the 217th General Assembly (2006).

B. The Policy Direction

In calling for the termination of a primarily military role for the United States, the four broad goals bear resemblance to those of the Iraq Study Commission (or Baker-Hamilton) Report. The first goal addresses a motivational context within the United States, while the next three are processes in which the United States would help or support a genuine work of the international community that has been largely kept at arms length. Reconciliation also has spiritual and relational dimensions and is linked to rebuilding since the refugees are disproportionately a "brain drain" of the most educated citizens. The recommendations also focus on the very difficult situation of the already small Christian community in Iraq, whose situation (like those of Christian minorities elsewhere in the region) has been made more difficult by the actions and statements of the U.S. government. In general, the last twenty years have shown the increasing importance of addressing religious dimensions in international politics, perhaps especially in the Middle East.

The study paper provides some assessment of the effects of the multiparty civil war in "the Arab world's Yugoslavia," which has always made the number of troops deployed into Iraq a secondary (though important) matter. It is the basic assumption that the U.S. has the right to "transform" the Middle East, starting with Iraq, that is challenged by a belief in democracy and self-determination. Opinion polls in Iraq regularly show majorities favoring U.S. withdrawal.⁸ The effects of tactical decisions like the "surge" or the alliance with once-hostile Sunnis can be debated. Advocates of withdrawal maintain that residual U.S. garrisons will continue to focus resentment while not furthering our two main strategic interests in the region: protecting allies and oil interests, which they see achievable through naval and air power from bases outside Iraq.⁹ In the long term, Arabic and Muslim cultures need to be far better understood, alternative energy sources must be developed, and the role of inter-religious cooperation for peace much more respected. The long occupation of Palestine by Israel, as the Baker-Hamilton report notes, is widely associated with the occupation of Iraq and remains an undeniable source of radicalization throughout the Middle East, and indeed a matter of concern for most U.S. allies as well.

Any substantial increases in reconstruction funds for Iraq need to be seen in light of current war costs, which include some reconstruction efforts, primarily in Iraq. Using nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office numbers, Reuters reports: "All of the Iraq and Afghanistan war money—about \$11 billion a month—is effectively being put on a government credit card at a time when U.S. government debt has skyrocketed to more than \$9 trillion, up from around \$5.6 trillion when Bush took office. . . ."¹⁰ The recession, reinforced by the net trade deficit (\$811.5 billion in 2006) and increased oil costs, may eventually put pressure on military spending, although the Pentagon budget request has now "reached its highest level since World War II," excluding "supplementals" for the wars.¹¹

C. The Study Paper and Continuing Questions for Christians in the United States

After a theological introduction, the study paper reviews the arguments for the war and the facts that have been revealed concerning the pre-9/11 ambitions of some top U.S. officials to remove Saddam Hussein, as well as over-optimistic dreams of establishing democracies throughout the Middle East, and understated interests in maintaining access to oil and markets. Clearly, many false statements were made about the existence of weapons of mass destruction and about purported linkages between the Sunni extremists responsible for 9/11 and the secular Baathist regime of Iraq.¹² This resolution does not answer the question, however, of whether the patterns of deception that have been revealed approach the level of impeachable offenses. Neither does this report focus on the pattern of counterterrorism measures that have led to large-scale indefinite detention and mistreatment of alleged combatants in Iraq, Afghanistan, Guantanamo Bay, and in secret prisons acknowledged by President George W. Bush. The 2006 assembly spoke strongly against torture and government surveillance and called for an

investigation of apparent violations of U.S. Constitutional and Geneva protections. The question of whether military and/or political leaders should be prosecuted is left open—only low level military personnel have been imprisoned so far.

In addition to those questions concerning the rule of law, there are questions concerning the governmental choices before Iraq and the United States. This report does not specify a level of federal devolution or even partition of Iraq on religious or ethnic lines. As in the Balkans, Somalia, the Sudan, and more recently Kenya, political pressures can open up ethnic, religious, and tribal tensions. We caution against exaggerating religious differences, and lift up instances of inter-confessional and ethnic harmony, as well as the uses of truth and reconciliation commissions, demonstrating the role of what Presbyterian ethicist Donald Shriver (in his book, *An Ethic for Enemies*) terms, “forgiveness in politics.”¹³ In the United States, the growing unpopularity of the war in Iraq has underlined the massive powers of the presidency to establish policy through administrative fiat, but we leave it an open question whether the three branches of our own government are out of balance.

In terms of the role of the church, it must be noted that the already small Presbyterian community of five congregations has been severely reduced by flight and death and functions largely underground. The Christian community overall, which had been allowed freedom of worship and relative security under Saddam Hussein, has been reduced by fundamentalist Muslim “jihadis” and driven from some areas, as have other religious minorities. With these refugees, as with others associated with the U.S. occupation, the U.S. government faces a choice of whether to allow immigration to the U.S. or to push repatriation into hostile areas.¹⁴

As this resolution is finalized in February, the “frontline” in dealing with terror seems to be Pakistan, following the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, followed closely by the resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan. It lies beyond the scope of this resolution to analyze the fragility of “nation-building” in Afghanistan and the dangers of subsidizing a military dictatorship in Pakistan. Alliances with military governments or other dictatorships are inherently unstable, and high levels of military assistance do not assure that U.S. national interests or purposes will be served. Humanitarian assistance can also strengthen one party regimes, but offers greater possibility for the growth of civil society and voluntary institutions and lessens the appeal of religious and other extremism—if it is administered with competence, commitment, and international coordination.

In Iraq, despite the highest yearly U.S. death toll in 2007 (899), a “surge” in the number of U.S. troops (130,000 to 160,000), a ceasefire by the Mahdi army, plus alliances with Sunni tribal groups and de facto ethno-religious cleansing, contributed to a decline in levels of violence in late 2007. The almost-entirely Shiite government of Prime Minister Maliki opposes the arming of new militias once allied to insurgents, but these Sunni groups have helped reduce the role of Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia (a domestic Sunni group now estimated at ten thousand that did not exist in Iraq prior to 2003). The lack of progress in meeting most “benchmarks” and moving forward politically in the time bought by the “surge” partly reflects the religious and communal polarization of Iraqi parties. Yet there remains a continuing commitment to national unity by a majority of Shiites and Sunnis, though not Kurds. And in this commitment to be Iraqis, despite all suffering and destruction, there is perhaps hope of a peaceful reconstruction without further civil war. But that remains an open question as well.

To Repent, to Restore, to Rebuild, and to Reconcile
A Study Paper on Lessons Learned and Directions Toward Peace in Iraq

I. Introduction

The purpose of this study paper is to state more fully the Christian basis for the “costly lessons” affirmed in the resolution and for the directions signaled in its title, “to repent, to restore, to rebuild and to reconcile.” In practical terms, repentance can simply mean changing the direction of our policy, but it means here changing assumptions about how international relations are done. Similarly, the bipartisan Iraq Study Group (Baker-Hamilton Commission) speaks frequently of the need for “national reconciliation” in Iraq, building on dialogue, equitable sharing of oil and other resources, and even-controversial “amnesty” for those who participated in the horrific violence of the past five years.¹⁵ Beyond this emphasis on retaining national coherence through hard compromise and international support—goals we support and see no need to duplicate in many cases—this paper sees the response to Iraq as a major test for how the international role of the U.S. may be revised. In this, it is influenced by the work of Donald W. Shriver Jr., on both forgiveness and repentance as faith-inspired approaches to reconnect power and morality in international affairs. Its primary author is Edward L. Long Jr., a prolific scholar well-versed in Just War and Just Peace thinking, with significant insights from Gary Dorrien, a third well-known ethicist whose assessments of foreign policy appears regularly in the *Christian Century* and other periodicals.

Many observers have bemoaned the fact that the United States did not build an international consensus after 9/11 to address the causes and cures of terrorism in a way that would bridge cultural and religious divides. But the bigger missed opportunity came when the Cold War ended. Rather than redirecting the enormous military expenditure toward human needs in a “peace dividend,” the United States continued to build its military power as the “indispensable nation” in a “unipolar” new world order.¹⁶ Beyond this, a number of influential policy thinkers believed it was time for the “one remaining superpower” to reshape the world. Some of this was idealism, some was ideology, but the combination resonated with Americans who

already saw their nation as an “exception” to the destiny of normal nations. After the deeply disturbing attack on September 11, 2001, the proponents of a plan to remove Saddam Hussein through regime change—first publicly proposed in the United States in January 1998—were positioned to carry out that reshaping plan, ostensibly to “democratize” the Middle East. Of the eighteen members of the neoconservative “Project for a New American Century” who signed the 1998 public letter urging that “removing Saddam Hussein . . . needs to become the aim of American foreign policy,” eleven gained high-level appointments in George W. Bush’s administration.¹⁷ Afghanistan became the acknowledged initial war focus to remove the Taliban who sheltered Al Qaeda, but virtually immediately, as then-counter-terrorism director Richard Clarke reports, links were sought between Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein.¹⁸

At this time, the United States may be faced with another “mythic” or deeply formative moment, as its capacity to maintain a military budget larger than those of all other nations combined, and to exercise “full spectrum dominance” in the world, may now be severely curtailed by the costs and consequences of the Iraq war. If the United States is, in fact, moving into a time of relative decline as a world power, it will be all the more important to understand how this situation came about, and what wiser role this country may yet play in helping establish a “just and durable peace.” And if such a redirection is to take place, it seems likely to require a Christian vision much bigger than nationalism, a reconciling patriotism, or “prophetic realism” explored in studies such as this one.

To call on one’s own nation to “restore, rebuild, reconcile,” much less “repent,” requires a deep conviction that there is a better way. That way is not simply a distillation of lessons, however wise, or a list of recommendations as the resolution in part provides. We find the fundamental way of redirection in the peace of Christ, whose “way, truth, and life” reveal a basic coherence of means and ends that brings violent means and peaceful goals into sharpest contradiction. The way, the truth, and the life preached and lived by Jesus of Nazareth is to Christians a summary of salvation: that God acts through the love of Christ to save and that only by responding in love of God and neighbor do we experience that salvation fully.

The Confession of 1967 affirms that “God’s reconciling act in Jesus Christ is a mystery which the Scriptures describe in various ways” (*The Book of Confessions*, 9.09). The Bible presents many images of salvation, and many of these involve the making of peace and sharing material blessings through the sacrificial yet abundant life in Jesus Christ. Calling our nation (and others) to repent and to contribute as lavishly to restoration and reconstruction as we have to war is a necessary part, in our view, of the long-term work of reconciliation to overcome the mistrust and frequent hatred of the United States expressed by the Iraqi people. Perhaps for all of the Middle East, we might say that Iraq has become the frontline in the struggle for reconciliation.

Because the Confession of 1967 speaks so clearly about the linkage of peace and justice with reconciliation, it was influential in the major 1980 policy, *Peacemaking: The Believers’ Calling*. Notice how it describes the place of peace in the work of the Holy Spirit:

God the Holy Spirit fulfills the work of reconciliation in human life. The Holy Spirit creates and renews the church as the community in which human beings are reconciled to God and to one another. The Spirit enables us to receive forgiveness as we forgive one another and to enjoy the peace of God as we make peace among ourselves. In spite of our sin, the Spirit gives us power to become representatives of Jesus Christ and his gospel of reconciliation to all. (9.20). (Inclusive Language Version in *Church & Society*, Vol. 92:5; May/June 2002, p. 206).

The peace of Christ is neither easy nor cheap, neither for God, nor for us. It is a call to sacrifice, to take up one’s cross, to be converted and led by God’s Spirit. As in everyday life, where our faith helps us order the goods of life and avoid idols, so in community the church must stand for truths that put even nations in their place. The peace of Christ is powerful as the truth is sometimes divisive: God’s questions echo in our minds and hearts, from God’s question to Cain about Abel’s fate to Jesus’ basic question, “what does it profit a person to gain the whole world and lose his soul?” (Luke 9:25) In national terms, what does it profit a country to become an empire and lose its character?

This is not the place for a full theology of peace, but it is necessary to indicate that the words chosen to title this background paper refer to fundamental movements of God’s redemption, even if none—such as reconciliation of Shia and Sunni—are likely to be fully achievable.

We ourselves must repent for confusing comfort and even security with being centered in God’s promise. The sacrifices of dead and wounded soldiers need to be honored, but not used to justify the slaughter of innocents as if they were terrorists. To take the lives of others, to limit the fulfillment of others’ lives for the enrichment of our own, this is to be in a foreign land, far from the path of righteousness. The Reformed Church never denies that there is a terrorist threat; we know that each of us, and even great nations, can be guilty of terror, torture, and casual cruelty. The memory of the innocent 9/11 victims, invoked so often, is truly honored when it points to peace.

In Ulrich Mauser’s *The Gospel of Peace* (WJKP, 1992), there is a careful survey of the way peace is portrayed in Scripture. Mauser shows how peace in the Old Testament is often pictured as coming after violent struggle, and that struggle is often related to idolatry. Idolatry, the worship of false gods, is itself linked to greed and injustice, so that the establishment of peace also restores justice. In the New Testament, Jesus famously says, “blessed are the peacemakers,” (Matt. 5:9), the only

time the word “peacemaker” appears. But peace is pervasive in the blessing of well-being, or shalom, that is repeatedly proclaimed by Jesus and the disciples. Acts 10:36 sums up the whole story of Jesus as “the good news of peace.”¹⁹

A basic link between the peace of Christ, restoration, and rebuilding, can be seen in the way the proclamation of peace and the announcement of the kingdom or reign of God go with Jesus’ healing power. Mauser summarizes the element of struggle with evil in the healings, the way some are seen as exorcisms, expelling satanic spirits and breaking accursed conditions. When Jesus is said to have healed “every disease,” Mauser sees a universalizing of Jesus’ healing. The peace of God does not use violent methods, even or especially in the Garden of Gethsemane; the cross and resurrection show a struggle and victory over illegitimate powers.

On a personal level, repentance leads to a restoration of inner connection with God and new or renewed growth in the Spirit: sanctification, regeneration. This is not the work of nations of themselves, but it has a communal dimension sometimes seen in national policy. In the biblical history of Israel, we see prophets repeatedly calling on their nation and others to repent. Exile is partly punishment for national sinfulness; the restoration and rebuilding of Zion, described in Ezra and Nehemiah, requires new dedication, though it also shows continued struggle over the land and identity of its inhabitants. That the exiles are allowed to return and that relative peace is maintained are attributed to changes in the attitude of a Persian emperor in which God’s hand is seen. (Many commented early in the war about the Bible’s frequent references to places in what is now Iraq; Baghdad as Babylon, Mosul as Nineveh, etc. Now so many of those inhabitants are in exile and their cultural heritage in jeopardy.)

The material aspect of restoring peace and justice can be heard sharply in James, which is so much a call to repentance for those who have much. “If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,’ and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that?” (James 2:15–16). A chapter later James returns to “peaceable” wisdom with moral force: “But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace” (3:17–18). Then James looks at “what causes wars” and murderousness and names covetousness, vanity, pride, and doublemindedness or inner conflict rather than humble faith. “Friendship with the world,” or the world’s standards, functions as idolatry and makes one “an enemy of God” (James 4:4).²⁰

Reconciliation as overcoming social divisions cannot, again, be extrapolated directly from the personal focus of James, despite the emphasis on righteousness or justice. But James is addressing the roots of violence and naming idols. In the early Church, as Walter Wink describes in *Engaging the Powers*, violence and idolatry were closely associated and pacifism was resistance to both. Killing for Rome was sacrificing to a false god. Wink’s work provides an analysis of how the New Testament does speak of systems in the sometimes apocalyptic language of “principalities and powers.” More importantly, the kingdom or reign of God is itself an intrinsically social reality and provides the link between personal redemption and communal participation.

In a short book, *When the Powers Fall: Reconciliation in the Healing of Nations*, Wink looks at God’s reign as God’s sovereignty in the world and in the believer, both outside and inside. In symbolic shorthand, he refers to the “Domination system: a social system characterized by hierarchical power relations, economic inequality, oppressive politics, patriarchy, ranking, aristocracy, taxation, standing armies, and war. Violence became the preferred means for adjudicating disputes and getting and holding power.”²¹ This echoes what James was warning against. Wink looks at the ways Jesus refused to exalt himself, the ways he “took the form of a servant,” unlike the rulers of the Gentiles, who “lord it over each other.” To proclaim the “kingdom of God,” then, is to practice a different politics, to proclaim an alternative order based in equality and nonviolence rather than domination.

When dictatorships fall, Wink looks to the Church to live out its alternative politics through forgiveness and reconciliation. Though forgiveness is for reconciliation, the former can be unilateral; the latter is inherently mutual. Wink distinguishes between true and false forgiveness and reconciliation: the key is the role of truth, and this leads him to examine the truth and reconciliation commissions in many Latin American countries, South Africa, and Namibia. In almost all cases, former military dictators and torturers declared amnesty and gave themselves impunity, effectively refusing repentance. Yet still the power of truth worked to heal in those who had suffered. By the way of biblical application, Wink comes to a position similar to that developed in social ethics and history by Donald W. Shriver Jr.

In *An Ethic for Enemies: Forgiveness in Politics* (1995), Shriver examines the key ways forgiveness has played a role in the relations between the United States, Germany, Japan, and between white and black Americans. Though forgiveness is seen as distinctive and freeing by Christians and non-Christians, such as Hannah Arendt, Shriver describes the way it had been privatized in what he calls “the sacramental captivity of forgiveness, 500–1500,” where forgiveness took particular ritual and institutional forms of confession, absolution, and penance, usually with specific gradations.²² Shriver goes on to look at historic moments and leaders, such as Lincoln, who was able to say, “with malice toward none, and charity toward all,” looking to reconciliation after the Civil War, just days before his death. Here is a key conclusion that may speak to the political leadership needed in our time:

... only in a context of perceived interconnectedness between participants in great traumatic political injustice can one go on to assert the symbolic, representative role of politicians in the enactment of a political form of forgiveness. An indefinite but real network of victims and agents calls for that role. Whether leaders accuse an enemy of crime, confess to crimes of their own people, or hold out hopes for a future reconciliation, they do all of this on behalf of one collective in addressing another. To deny this representative, symbolic role to politicians is to impoverish their service to a society's dealing with its past wrongs and its present corrective responsibility to the future.²³

In *Honest Patriots: Loving a Country Enough to Remember Its Misdeeds* (2005), Shriver develops the theme of political-social repentance more fully. His book is a form of listening and reflecting deeply on the moral experiences of Germany, South Africa, and the United States, in our case with particular attention to African American and Native American relations with the European American majority. If he were to have chosen proof-texts, they would be from the book of Lamentations. Shriver, too, looks at the Truth and Reconciliation process in South Africa and the painful stripping away of official denial that it involved, even when its official amnesty did not produce repentance. A rare few Afrikaner leaders made public confessions that revealed what Shriver calls, honest patriotism rather than a nationalism that favored only part of the nation. In turning to race relations in the United States, he is eloquent about his own past as a Southerner, and about the ironies of American history. He ends with a look at the Iraq war, and “the question presses upon Americans now as seldom before in our history: for what displays of *hubris*, in our current collective stance in the world, may the American government one day have to consider apologizing?”²⁴

When the paper moves to consider the rationales stated and unstated for the invasion of Iraq, the question of *hubris*, pride, or what the psychologists call, grandiosity, will return.²⁵ Shriver looked at long-term periods of arrogance and amnesia; a reporter on the conduct of the Iraq war, Robert Woodward, titled a book, *State of Denial*, for a governing style that tried to impose ideology on reality.²⁶ It is not necessary to understand the United States as an empire, to see at least some of the use of its power as imperial.

Much of the work of peacemaking is not done on the national level by political leaders, but by citizens engaging in a whole range of activities that show a more peaceful reality is possible. Political organizing can help change a country's motivation and address its fears, particularly if it can appeal to both patriotism and moral empowerment—even to the spiritual empowerment that Christian faith provides. Yet we are also aware that there will be resistance to having U.S. forces pull back to allow Iraq to regain its sovereignty and reluctance to provide funds for rebuilding a nation that is no longer a threat. Thus we turn to examples of peacemaking that also show reactions, lest we think reconciliation will not be costly.

The role of religious peacemakers is lifted up in *Peacemakers in Action: Profiles of Religion in Conflict Resolution*, edited by David Little, which describes interfaith work, including joint Muslim-Christian peacemaking in Nigeria and Palestine/Israel. Little writes, “... the experience of most of the Peacemakers in this volume ... proves that even those figures most consistently devoted to the principles of conciliation and amity are not in fact strangers to conflict and violence. Those who seek peace by peaceful means are, despite their intentions, often the objects of hatred and retaliation; they predictably heighten tension rather than relax it, because they denounce what they believe is injustice and abuse.”²⁷

Little outlines “four general types of peacemaking that apply to the work of religious peacemakers ... enforcement, peacekeeping, institution-and-capacity building, and agreement-making.” The first two functions can be backed up by force of arms, but the second two involve the particular diplomatic and participatory strategies of religious peacemakers. “The first is occupied with the design and creation over time of an array of institutions and practices capable of increasing and sustaining the balance of social harmony and civil unity over hostility and violence. This entails broadening and strengthening commitment to and training in multireligious and multiethnic respect and tolerance, along with the management and reduction of violence, human rights compliance, rule of law, empowerment of women and minorities, advancement of educational and vocational opportunities, expansion of health care, reduction of inequities in wealth and power...” Agreement-making is the process of sustained interaction by which hostile parties are brought to work out and accept a peace settlement. “Track One” diplomacy involves official governmental and third party representatives; “Track Two” is unofficial diplomacy by non-governmental groups and individuals. One example of the latter is Presbyterian minister William Lowrey's “creative work in helping facilitate agreements between the Nuer and Dinka peoples in Southern Sudan.”²⁸

In light of the particulars summarized by Little, it should be clear that “nation-building” involves rebuilding relationships within a given nation among its peoples, and among neighboring nations who may rightly fear the contagion of chaos or the burden of refugees. This section has moved from the peace given us in Christ to the ways we share that peace, without false innocence or arrogance, to those who are in conflicts—and that includes ourselves.

II. Summary of Previous Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Resolutions on the Iraq War (2003 and 2004) and “Violence, Religion, and Terrorism” (2004)

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has studied the situation in Iraq for more than five years and has issued a number of background papers, policy recommendations, and study guides to foster thoughtful deliberation about the moral issues raised by American policy. There is no doubt but what the war in Iraq has created enormous disagreement as to whether or not it

constitutes a wise undertaking. The members of our church are not all agreed as to what can or should be done. However complex, the issues do not go away nor can they be ignored. A great deal is at stake—militarily, politically, diplomatically, interreligiously—and anyone who cares about basic humanitarian concerns must address the problem.

The first document in which the Presbyterian church dealt with Iraq was presented to the 215th General Assembly (2003) (Denver) and was entitled “Iraq and Beyond.” This document raised serious doubts about the moral legitimacy of preventive wars and the national policy of full spectrum dominance that was coming to be the operative basis of national policy, especially the action taken against Iraq. It acknowledged the unresolved differences between opponents of all armed conflict and those who acknowledge the legitimacy of military action under just war principles. It pointed out that it is possible to support U.S. military personnel as persons without linking that support with approval of national policy. It emphasized the importance of keeping noncombatants, especially civilians, from harm; highlighted the need to maintain the viability of economic life and public order in taking any action; and urged cooperation with the United Nations in creating and implementing all strategies.

It also pointed to the importance of religious communities for the humanitarian renewal of Iraq. The Worldwide Ministries Division of the church provided reinforcing considerations that emphasized the importance of maintaining good relationships with Christian churches in the Middle East and with the Muslim community in our country, and underscored the commitment to love enemies and that is at the heart of our Christian peace-seeking.²⁹

One year later, the General Assembly meeting in Richmond accepted another study about Iraq with the title “Iraq: Our Responsibility and the Future.” The study paper was more explicit in looking at just war principles and drew moral distinctions between various kinds of military intervention—concluding that strategic intervention for the purposes of regime change was the most difficult to defend on moral grounds, if not indeed impossible. This paper also affirmed our solidarity with Iraqi Christians and their churches, called for pastoral support for U.S. military personnel and their families, encouraged continued prayer for peace and stability in Iraq, condemned in the strongest possible terms torture and the abuse of prisoners, and called for a mission plan to respond to the needs and concerns of our brothers and sisters in Iraq. The most pointed aspect of the action taken in 2004 was to concur in the judgment of many church leaders around the world, that the invasion of Iraq has been “unwise, immoral, and illegal.” It called upon the United States government to speedily restore sovereignty to Iraq. The General Assembly also declared with equal seriousness that the “United States bear(s) a legal and moral burden for the reconstruction of Iraq.”³⁰

The doubts and criticism of launching military action against Iraq that are expressed by the actions of the General Assemblies of 2003 and 2004 were made when there was somewhat greater support for the war among the public-at-large than has come to be the case. These criticisms embodied a moral judgment that the military action failed the tests of moral legitimacy commonly posed by just war thinking. An entirely different kind of criticism would later develop in other circles—criticism that reflected disillusionment with how the war was being carried out and a judgment that it has been badly managed rather than ill conceived.³¹ Both kinds of criticism were to combine by early 2006 to provide increasingly widespread support in the general public for bringing the military action to an end, though no consensus developed as to just how this should be accomplished. The administration has rejected all such calls for abandoning its military venture and mounted a so-called “surge” designed to provide time for political progress among Iraqi leaders and to demonstrate the possibility of a more promising outcome from the military effort. This has further intensified the public debate but not alleviated public concern about the war.

While pressure to end America’s military involvement in Iraq is likely to gain increasing support, this does not necessarily mean that the moral issues have come to be more fully understood or that the premises that led to taking military action in the first place have been repudiated. To withdraw because of fatigue or disillusionment would be quite different from seeking to redress the action on moral grounds, as we recommend. This does not preclude combining these impulses to end the war, but it does recognize that they may be quite different reasons for the same actions and different judgments about what are appropriate subsequent responses. It is the role of the church to insist that the moral reasons not be overlooked irrespective of whether or not opponents of the war are successful in bringing some cessation to the military action. It is important, then, not merely to add whatever influence we can exert to the public calls for changing a policy, but to think about the implications of what has already been done and the moral dimensions of any possible future actions.

III. Reconsideration of War Motivations, Objectives, and Decision-Framework

A. *Issues Related to the Decision to Initiate Military Action Against Iraq*

The wisdom of taking military action in Iraq had been a source of debate from the very beginning. Several reasons have been advanced for taking such action and each has been scrutinized at length. The result is that each proposed justification for taking such action has tended to lose credibility as the debate has progressed and as more and more information has shown the inadequacy of those justifications.

1. One of the reasons, which figured prominently in the beginning, was a belief that Iraq was in possession—or would soon be in possession—of weapons of mass destruction. Saddam Hussein had used chemical weapons against the Kurds, and he had resisted efforts of inspectors from the United Nations to have clear and unencumbered access to all parts of his country. There was ambivalence among members of the United Nations as to how rigorously to hold Iraq accountable and the resulting hesitation created a situation that seemed to invite more stringent action by the United States acting as the chief world power.

It has subsequently been learned that the intelligence reports implying there was a serious threat from weapons of mass destruction held by Iraq were either faulty or deliberately misinterpreted in order to bolster the case for making a preventive strike. Extensive investigative reporting has since cast doubts on the presence of such weaponry and even on the intentions of those who used this argument to legitimize the attack on Iraq. Of particular relevance has been the “Downing Street Memo” made public July 23, 2003, which indicated that the decision to go to war against Iraq was well crystallized before the putative evidence of weapons of mass destruction was fully assessed.³² And it may have been possible, with longer time, that Hussein’s acquiescence to weapons inspections would have continued.

2. A second alleged reason for taking preventive military action against Iraq was the awareness that Saddam Hussein was a ruthless and evil ruler who had little concern even for the welfare of Iraq’s people (especially the Kurds and Shiites). The fact that Saddam Hussein was a brutal ruler has never been significantly contested; but there has been a difference in judgment as to what should have been done about this horror.

A traditional assumption governing the use of military action has been to regard self-defense as legitimate whereas aggression is not. However, more recently a body of thought has been gaining acceptance approving intervention for humanitarian reasons.³³ There has also been a school that believes American power should be used to bring about free and democratic regimes where they do not now exist. Humanitarian intervention to alleviate suffering has the widest support, followed by intervention to establish minimally functional order in cases where no such order is operative. But intervention to overthrow a particularly cruel regime, which was the situation in Iraq, is far more problematic, particularly if carried out unilaterally. The action was essentially unilateral despite the largely nominal commitment of forces by nations belonging to what was called “the coalition of the willing.” There is little warrant in international law to support the view that a single nation is entitled to delegate to itself the right to judge another nation “evil” and on that basis initiate military action against it.

Moreover, as the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has indicated in studying this matter, any intervention, even if undertaken for humanitarian purposes, must be governed by measures similar to those used in just war thinking, one of which is that it must be a last resort and another that it must have a reasonable chance of success. The military action against Iraq did not meet either test. It was taken before the international community had exhausted all diplomatic remedies and with limited regard for the incipient tensions and rivalries among religious factions in Iraq that would stymie any constructive outcome from the simple removal of an oppressive leader. Many students of the Muslim world and Iraq in particular were aware of the potential pitfalls in this kind of preventive maneuver but their wisdom, like much of a State Department study process, was disregarded.

3. A third alleged reason, not entirely distinct from the previous humanitarian concerns, was to help create a democratic example in the region. Idealistic in a way, the idea of exporting democracy is to some a form of soft intervention. Yet it has support, particularly if any military occupation by the United States can be an exception to the imperial rule, and if the U.S. is a chosen exception in itself. This agenda is even more triumphalist than the effort during World War I to make the world “safe for democracy” (an effort that was anything but successful). Saddam Hussein was removed from power rather quickly following the beginning of the Iraq war and elections were held to symbolize movement toward democratic governance of the nation. But the rise of bitter hostilities between political and sectarian factors within a power vacuum undercut the confidence that Iraq was either willing or able to cohere in an adequate way to make democracy possible. Democracy depends, not merely on freedom, but upon the acceptance of covenantal responsibility between the members of a society who agree to accept majority decisions as having a claim on their behavior. It will not arise simply from the removal of a tyrannical regime.

4. Another reason advanced for taking military action against Iraq was to combat terrorism. It was alleged that Iraq either was already, or could soon become a central actor in the support of terrorism even if it seemed to have no role in the attacks of 9/11. The trauma associated with those attacks, plus fear from an anthrax scare, prompted a strong clamor for decisive response. But careful inquiry, such as the work of the Kean-Hamilton Commission, showed that there was little, if any, connection between Saddam and Al Qaeda. Unfortunately, when the commission came to that conclusion its judgment continued to be questioned by the advocates of the Iraq war. Indeed, the connection has been alluded to repeatedly by the president and spokespersons for the administration despite the well-substantiated evidence to the contrary. This attempt to project the existence of Al Qaeda in Iraq back onto the time of Saddam Hussein’s regime has no legitimacy yet is used to bolster support for having taken the military action against Iraq.

5. Yet another reason for taking military action against Iraq has been proposed, not so much by the proponents of such action, but by its critics. It is suggested that the primary motivations for the use of military force to establish American dominance has been to protect American's access to oil, of which Iraq has a considerable supply. In his memoirs Alan Greenspan indicates this is the most operative underlying reason.³⁴ And certainly it has great plausibility, from the protection of the oil fields initially in the invasion (as chaos was allowed elsewhere) to the efforts by U.S. corporations and contractors to lock in favorable oil extraction agreements. Paradoxically, however, as the invasion has helped drive the price of oil up, the international thirst for oil did not seem as great five years ago.

Obviously, the first four reasons have greater appeal than the concern about oil. They have more positive sounding moral implications, either because they bear some similarity to self-defense or to the idealistic spread of freedom in the Middle East. While the anti-war slogan, "blood for oil," may thus point to a big part of the truth, there is another understated rationale for the war that has also come out more with time.

6. Starting before the 1998 open letter urging President Clinton to remove rather than simply "contain" Saddam Hussein, many of the "neoconservative" policymakers had been expressing ideas about how the United States should consolidate its power in the "unipolar," post-Cold War moment that opened up with the Soviet Union's implosion in 1989.³⁵ Influential beyond their numbers, though supported by various Washington-based "think tanks," neoconservative policymakers provided key direction for the Iraq war and remain among its key backers. Books on the group are many, and it is beyond this paper's scope to attempt a full assessment of their influence.³⁶ A flavor comes through from Charles Krauthammer: "The form of realism that I am arguing for—call it the new unilateralism—is clear in its determination to self-consciously and confidently deploy American power in pursuit of those global ends [of maintaining world peace and stability]" ... The new unilateralism argues explicitly and unashamedly for maintaining unipolarity, for sustaining America's unrivaled dominance for the foreseeable future. ... This in itself will require the aggressive and confident application of unipolar power rather than falling back, as we did in the 1990's, on paralyzing multilateralism. ... To impiously quote Benjamin Franklin: 'History has given you an empire, if you will keep it.'"³⁷

Gary Dorrien describes how some of the self-described neoimperialist elements had to be soft-pedaled in public, though they were vigorously debated by historians like Niall Ferguson (pro) and Paul Kennedy (con). America in this sense was an "empire in denial," though to the neoconservatives it was almost always "a benign hegemon." The (first) Gulf War showed the effectiveness of force but left unfinished business. William Kristol, Robert Kagan, and the Project for a New American Century, after Afghanistan, made "the case for extending the war to Iraq, Iran, and Hezbollah, usually in that order."³⁸ Other lists of potential targets were developed: the "axis of evil" that ended up in President Bush's 2002 State of the Union included Iraq, Iran, and North Korea. In military terms, this meant a steady build-up of forces, one that would be able to carry on more than one war at a time. And in terms of planning within the White House, this meant preparing for the Iraq war through much of 2002.

In the next subsection, on the management of the war, it is important to remember that the State Department began a "Future of Iraq Project" only one month after 9/11, convening seventeen working groups of varying sizes and producing a thirteen-volume study, now declassified and available on-line.³⁹ This project did warn against wholesale de-Baathification (that purged skilled middle managers throughout Iraqi society and helped feed the Sunni insurgency), the disbanding of the army, the possible need for a "five to ten year" occupation, and of the need for immediate security. Yet a sample from the "Democratic Principles" working group carries echoes of the neoconservatives' unrealistic realism (really a form of idealism):

Nothing in this report, however, requires of the UN or the U.S. to police or manage into existence the new and budding democratic institutions. That is a challenge that the people of Iraq must and will face on their own. A historic opportunity that is as important as anything that has happened in the Middle East since the fall of the Ottomans and the entry of British troops into Iraq in 1917 presents itself. Once the regime of Saddam Hussein is removed from power, Iraq can be remade out of the ashes. ...⁴⁰

As it turned out, the Department of Defense's Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance took over from the State Department would-be planners, and then the Coalition Provisional Authority took charge; an unnamed Defense official said the recommendations were "mostly ignored."⁴¹

Whatever the relative weight ascribed to the elements above, there is yet an additional matter that deserves to be considered in the debate over responsibility for the war. It concerns the role of the president in relationship to Congress. The Constitution places the decision to begin war in the hands of Congress. In the case of both the war in Vietnam and the war in Iraq, instead of actually declaring war Congress has passed resolutions delegating the authority to initiate military action to the president, to use at a time and under circumstances the executive branch deems strategically appropriate. This has been tacitly accepted as conforming to the spirit if not the letter of the Constitution, but leaving war to the discretion of the president may have the unintended consequence of adding to both presidential power and secrecy.

It would seem unwise that a decision to begin military action should rest in the hands of any single person, rather than be a matter on which the representatives of the people come to a common mind in face of a broadly acknowledged threat. That

may well have been the reason why the founding framers wrote the Constitution as they did, and a strict constructionist reading of the Constitution would hew to their judgment. Congress is the ongoing body most representative of the people. To vest the president with the power to determine when to initiate military action—which advocates of a strong executive role clearly desire—may militarize the role of the president from commander-in-chief responsible for policy to someone more involved in implementation. Is there a connection between the futility and unpopularity of both the Vietnam and Iraq wars and the fact both were undertaken on the authority of resolutions rather than specific declarations by a body representative of the people?

B. *Issues Stemming Out of the Conduct of the War*

The foregoing discussion focused on the question whether or not the decision to take military action against Iraq was morally warranted and who is best qualified to make such a decision. We must now consider questions as to whether or not that action has been carried out in an operationally productive or a morally responsible manner. These questions are not, of course, entirely insulated from the previous considerations. If the manner in which a war is carried out involves strategic blunders, logistical inadequacies, procedural malfeasance, and/or monetary opportunism, then Christians would be called to oppose a particular military venture even if the reasons for taking it were morally compelling.

Of course, we are never likely to know in advance whether or not the implementation of a military effort will be marred by bad judgments and operational short-sightedness. Therefore, the problems that are about to be discussed in this section were not immediately obvious when the action to go to war was taken or even when the Presbyterian General Assembly voted shortly thereafter to oppose doing so. The appearance of the following problems means that we must come back to the moral issue of the war in Iraq with new concerns.

1. The most striking and troubling aspect of the war's conduct has been the way in which alleged enemies have been treated. It has been generally (and questionably) portrayed as part of the struggle against terrorism. Because terrorism is often outside the traditional restraints of international behavior, it seems to many that those restraints need not be observed in dealing with it. Although there has been some difference of judgment about how great and how widespread the violations of traditional international standards have been, the use of interrogation techniques that cross the line into torture, the rendition of prisoners to other jurisdictions so they may be subject to more stringent and unacceptable treatment, and the detainment of individuals without access to legal counsel and redress have been far too prevalent to overlook. These practices are notoriously disturbing. They have been condemned by military and civilian leaders with impeccable standing as patriots as well as people with deep concerns for human rights.

The 217th General Assembly (2006), meeting in Birmingham, expressed its profound dismay at these developments.⁴² This action was separate and distinguishable from the opposition to the military action in Iraq taken two years earlier. Opposition to the use of torture (or to any excessively stringent means of extracting information from prisoners that violates humane standards) is an extension of the commitment to human rights that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has long espoused. Members of our church have been active in saying "No to Torture," and have held conferences, conducted demonstrations, given speeches, and used channels of civil protest to make their feelings known.

The attitude of the administration toward the criticism of torture has not been reassuring. The president flatly denies we employ torture but meanwhile his subordinates write memos (not always made public until ferreted out by investigative journalists) that allow for highly unusual and strenuous treatments that deeply offend the sensibilities of most Americans and other people in the world. The duplicity involved creates the same damage to credibility that attends the misuse of intelligence information in order to justify going to war and is perhaps far more serious. Sometimes with a straight face and often with unconvincing denials our leaders have given this nation a reputation for barbarism: Abu Graib, Guantanamo Bay, ghost detainees, waterboarding. ... In light of the judgment of most professional interrogators that torture is an unreliable way to extract information, this continuing tendency to embrace it is evidence of how deeply rooted in the thinking of many leaders is belief in the efficacy of violence. Although there is no explicit condemnation of the use of torture in the usual versions of just war teaching, it is a practice so far removed from the behavior expected of civilized communities that it would seem hardly necessary to state the prohibition. Yet now it needs to be emphasized. To flout the Geneva conventions, to make a false trade off between national security and civil liberties, and to imply all critics of doing so are somehow either weak or unpatriotic: these are alarming developments against which the most sober and vehement protest is needed.

2. Another feature in the conduct of the war against Iraq that needs to be scrutinized is the attempt to carry it out without a general mobilization of the country's human and economic resources. This means that the war has been carried out so as to raise the least resistance from the public at large and in a manner than allows the average citizen to avoid its impact or feel its costs. There has been no draft and no wartime tax. The Army, Marines, and Navy went to war; the country didn't.

Shrewd as this strategy may seem to have been as a way of avoiding the domestic turmoil that might result from conducting military operations that do not have widespread support it raises serious issues. In this first place this has placed inordinate obligations on the professional military, whether regulars or reserves. These have been ordered into combat on a repeated basis, tour after tour, often with only short respites between engagements. The price paid by their families, and in the

case of reservists by the disruption of their ongoing life plans, has been very high. This is more than a country should ask of them.

In the second place, pursuing warfare almost as if it is but one function of government—an ordinary and customary function rather than something extraordinary and unusual—undercuts the assumption that war should always be an extraordinary undertaking that requires special efforts by everyone in a society and that it should be ended as soon as a specific danger has been eliminated. While maintaining an appropriate defense is a continuous task, actual military operations shouldn't be. If the conduct of war is so construed as to seem to be normal, this can have a tendency to permanently militarize a society, however unintentionally.

3. Coupled with a strategy to conduct military operations without imposing sacrificial obligations on all members of society, the use of private contractors to supplement the military operations in Iraq raises serious moral concerns. These contractors have been employed for both quasi-combat roles—such as the protection of State Department staff—and in reconstruction efforts that can be carried out only under armed protection. Early on their conduct was specifically exempted from ordinary legal restraints so they do not necessarily feel the need to adhere to customary standards of behavior—particularly with regard to the use of force. Therefore, at times they have become an embarrassment and the government of Iraq has demanded that some of them be removed. According to some reports the number of persons serving in such roles may equal or exceed the number of properly designated and carefully disciplined members of the armed forces. Without being called such, some of these contractors are essentially mercenaries, often paid extraordinary sums for hazardous duty, but nevertheless sums that exceed their normal earning potential in other lines of work. Just war criteria have never specifically addressed the moral issues raised by such strategies. That may be simply because they are so egregious that moralists would not suppose they would even have to be explicitly condemned.

The use of contractors to rebuild the infrastructure destroyed by violence (whether from military action of our forces or by the violence of insurgents) poses another moral issue. Many of these contracts have been let without competitive bidding—presumably because of time constraints—and often to persons with close connections to those in high official positions in the government. This process has created a whole new industry that depends for its profit on the existence of warfare. In World War II, when it was recognized that many industrial firms stood to make unprecedented profits from supplying military-related needs, they were subject to an excess-profits tax that kept them from reaping inordinately high returns from providing war materials. There was a moral fairness in that which seems altogether lacking today. If firms are allowed to gain extraordinary remuneration from supplying military needs, this can create consequent pressures through lobbying and other means of exerting influence—to keep warfare going because it is financially attractive. Military operations involve too much tragedy, both to members of our own armed forces and to the soldiers and citizens of other nations, to be allowed to serve as the occasion of making particularly high private profit. That the moral issue incipient in the widespread use of contractors for quasi-military operations has not been raised more is a judgment on the extent to which as a nation we have become morally numb.

What has been noted is the lack of body armor and sufficiently armored vehicles, both for U.S. troops and also for Iraqis. At the same time, facilities like schools and police stations, touted as unheralded good effects of the occupation, have in too many cases been revealed to have been shoddily constructed by contractors of contractors in an environment rife with corruption. But especially if one is advocating “rebuilding” Iraq, how is the environment changed? “The Bush administration’s favors to oil-services company Halliburton alone were enormous, beginning with a no-bid federal contract for Iraqi reconstruction projects that was signed six months before the invasion. By the time that American troops entered Baghdad, Cheney’s former company held \$425 million in work orders for troop support projects ...; \$28 million for POW camps ...; \$50 million to fight oil well fires. ...”⁴³

IV. The Problem of Assessing Consequences and Responsibility

Acknowledging the limits of our social location and the ideological warp that affects all judgments, especially about historical events near to us in time, we must thus look at the way decisions and developments in Iraq are presented.

In assessing the current situation in Iraq this problem was especially evident in the use of General David H. Petraeus as a congressional witness asked to assess the policy of the administration and particularly the success of the surge. His appearance prompted much scrutiny, even skepticism, and one group opposed to the continuing military operations in Iraq highlighted the issue with an advertisement impugning the general’s integrity by dubbing him “General Betray Us.” This tactic was regrettable and produced a backlash—doing something to discredit the group’s cause. But a respectful treatment of the problem needs to be offered. General Petraeus, as an active duty military officer charged to carry out a policy, should not have been placed into the position of being a policy advocate. Regardless of his personal integrity and well-regarded competence, to expect him to offer testimony in support of a policy was simply unfair—to him and to his listeners. To be sure, the technical expertise of military officers must be factored into the making of policy, but this may be jeopardized by increasing the politicization of military leadership. Thus it seems wrong to make the general a party to policy controversies.

The use of General Petraeus stands in an instructive contrast to the manner in which the Bush administration treated the recommendations of the Iraq Study group chaired by Messrs. Baker and Hamilton. That group, composed of distinguished persons with great experience in both military and political affairs, reached the conclusion that the war should be terminated—albeit with certain safeguards—because it had relatively little chance of achieving the alleged purposes for which it was undertaken. Group deliberations tend to mitigate the problem of ideological bias more than do individual judgments and, therefore, presumably deserve to be taken more seriously than individual points of view. The use of one person directly committed to taking orders from the administration as an advocate for its policies and the tacit dismissal of the suggestions offered by a thoughtful and distinguished group provide a worrisome contrast. It is a contrast between an image of authority and the actuality of careful deliberation.

The problem of knowing and presenting information affects not only government policymaking, but how information is presented in newspapers, magazines, and broadcasts. Respect for the sacrifices made by the military should not make hearers, or even “embedded” journalists, cease to be careful to distinguish reporting from editorializing. The media in general are not immune from partisanship; hence the need to be clear about patterns of ownership, interests served, and conflicts of interest.

The particular perspective of the church always seeks insight from sisters and brothers abroad, aware at the same time that links to U.S. Christians can bring danger. What then, can we learn from our church connections about this troublesome war and controversial policy? As Presbyterians, we are connected by history and ecumenical unity with a small and minority Christian community in Iraq. Leaders from Iraq tell us things about their experiences and even venture to come to our shores and share such experiences with us. In most cases, our correspondents and visitors have expressed great grief over the consequences of American policy and described the extent to which the present turmoil in that country is particularly hard on them. Their suffering and risk are part of their testimony, though they also have limited views of a complex reality. When Younan Shiba, ecumenical delegate to the 216th General Assembly (2004) in Richmond was asked by a commissioner whether or not Christians in Iraq were better off than before the coming of the Americans, his answer was a resounding “No!” That was a shock to some of his audience who were accustomed to hearing more favorable reports and efforts by the administration to put a positive spin on information.

Similarly, in November of 2007, a delegation from the United States visited Jordan and was told Jordan had taken in between 500,000 and a million Iraqis—greatly straining the resources of the country without much, if any, help from the United States. Speaking to the delegation, Wade Fawzy Gouissous, director of the Middle East Council of Churches, decried the impact of the war in Iraq on church life in the Middle East and noted that whereas America once sent doctors and teachers to the area it now sends soldiers. He said that the Bush administration “has made our job as Christians very difficult in a Muslim region. The U.S. government needs to revise its message as a Christian nation in the world because, rightly or wrongly, the U.S. represents Christianity in the world.”⁴⁴

With rare exceptions, Christians do not regard the use of armed conflict as the most appropriate instrument of social transformation, even if some of them do admit that in some cases it may be a tragic necessity to be undertaken only as a last resort and primarily for defensive purposes. Christians are bound to have misgivings about what is happening in Iraq. To marshal evidence to show how and why this is the case is a form of social witness. For example, in September of 2007, Professor Dorrien provided a study paper for use along with the bulk of this paper written by Professor Long. His conclusions were blunt: “America’s debacle in Iraq has reached a crossroads. Iraqi society has been ripped part by ferocious insurgent and sectarian violence; the Maliki government is paralyzed by its sectarian bias; there is no military solution to the insurgency or the civil war; and by next spring the U.S. Army will be tapped out, necessitating reductions in troops levels.”

Dorrien goes on to discuss the Sunni/Shiite hostility, the presence of militia groups, the extent to which those Iraqis who can do so are fleeing the country, the move by the United States to arm Sunni groups within the triangle of Baghdad, Ramadi, and Tikrit to attack Al Qaeda, with a result that groups that hate each other are readied to create a seeming unending maelstrom. Dorrien’s analysis indicates how much American policy is deeply rooted in the acceptance of violence as the solution to the turmoil in Iraq and why it is bound to fail.⁴⁵

It is hard to predict what the Sunni militias in Anbar province will do once they displace Al Qaeda of Mesopotamia and begin to focus on their Shiite opponents in both the militias (like the Badr Organization) and the military. Many remember that funding conservative Sunnis to fight the Soviet Union in Afghanistan did not prevent them from turning against the West.

V. Reconciliation and Its Alternatives

As public opinion turns increasingly against the war, so opinion in churches that supported the war is also shifting in ways that are welcome to “mainline” churches whose voices were literally disregarded at the start of the war. A number of evangelicals, generally associated with the religious right and supportive of the president on other matters, are now expressing reservations about the wisdom of U.S. policy.⁴⁶ This may help open up the moral deliberation of our whole society, be-

cause the zeal with which the administration embraced its policy was reinforced by both Christians and Jews on the Religious Right.

There are various suggestions for dealing with the situation in Iraq, with multiple versions of each. Each possible alternative has potential strengths and unavoidable liabilities. It is frequently said, “There are no good solutions to the problem of Iraq,” but that must not be used as an excuse for not attempting to arrive at thoughtful judgments as to which of the imperfect suggestions is most deserving of support. Very little would ever happen in political life if people acted only when assured of making perfect decisions! Nor would political life be tolerable if people used the excuse that no good solutions are possible to continue to support obviously bad existing conditions. The overview of alternatives that follows is, like each of the options examined, imperfect and in need of refinement—but we believe it illustrates the kind of analysis that is needed and supports the substantially different strategy of multilateral reconciliation.

1. Continuing the reliance on military force: Those who believe that the use of superior American military power to create a different world is both feasible and legitimate are likely to suggest strategies that further that goal. With respect to Iraq, even if the mantra, “stay the course,” is not used for describing what is needed, we will see a commitment to the dominance of American power. These so-called “hawks” argue that we need to dedicate even greater resources to succeed militarily in Iraq than anything attempted up to now. Moreover, they are likely to urge the extension of this approach to other areas. For example, in the neoconservative camp, Norman Podhoretz would not only stay the course in Iraq but employ aerial bombing to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weaponry. He considers this as part of taking a firm stand and decisive action against all versions of Islamofascism—a term deliberately devised to conjure up analogies to the rise of dictatorships before World War II.⁴⁷ Podhoretz hurls charges of cowardice and anti-Americanism at opponents of current administration policy, and attacks even political realists as defeatists. He decries the media’s portrayal of the present situation as misguided and sees the world as sharply divided between good and evil forces.⁴⁸ This view is likely to sneer at all other proposals as failure of nerve, defeatism, or recipes for disaster. It sees little, in any, place for traditional diplomacy in settling disputes, and foresees decades of conflict that will eventually recast the political configuration of the world into American terms. We have suggested that the cost of this “rule by bayonet” is as high as its likelihood of success is low—but our goal is peace with justice.

This neoconservatism and the unilateralism it advocates is very radical. It is at odds with the social teaching of the Presbyterian and most other churches. Despite the crypto-idealism with which it seeks the eventual triumph of democracy, this is a view that depends almost entirely on a cynical trust in brute force. It is a reductionist rather than prudential form of political realism. It depends on instrumental reasoning that is opaque to any concerns about the misuse of power and disregards the value of moving as an international community toward peace achieved through cooperation and mutual endeavor. Although it does not seem possible to sustain democracy at home with such an imperial approach abroad, we acknowledge that this position is still influential.

2. Immediate withdrawal: The sharpest contrast to the proposal to extend and intensify the use of American power in Iraq—ratcheting up the pressure in order to succeed—is the proposal to withdraw our troops with the most feasible and logistical dispatch. This proposal is often dubbed “cut and run.” Those who suggest such action tend to see the turmoil in Iraq to be primarily the consequence of American presence and believe that removing that presence would prompt various factions in Iraq to face the necessity of arriving at a viable way to work together. They also believe that since America is the target of the insurgent activity that has arisen in Iraq, withdrawing the target would decrease the extent to which terrorists may use Iraq for staging future activities.

It is simply impossible to know what would happen if American forces were withdrawn from Iraq with the greatest possible dispatch. Those who advocate withdrawal may be correct but they have not convinced the majority of people this is the best course of action to take. Even though a majority of people are anxious to find some solution to the present situation, they sense that there would be something irresponsible in simply walking away from a situation that has developed in large measure from actions our nation has taken. If using military power preventively to overcome tyrannies and advance the cause of democracy is problematic, to begin such action and then abandon it if unsuccessful would seem to be even more so. That being said, without serious planning for orderly withdrawal, it could be that this will become the only possible option—however reminiscent of the U.S. exit from Vietnam, the French exit from Algeria, and even the British exit from India. If overhasty exit becomes the case, the trauma associated with having created turmoil and leaving people to suffer it unaided could be very grave.

3. Gradual departure—prolonged occupation: Most of the other proposals for dealing with the situation in Iraq stand somewhere between the poles just described. One of them, which employs the slogan “We’ll stand down as they stand up,” foresees phased withdrawal taking place as conditions improve. This proposal, which is probably closer to what the administration has in mind than simply staying put, might seem to be procedurally realistic. However, it still puts too much reliance on military means of establishing order and it is too often pursued as a unilateral strategy. Moreover, it fails to take into account the tremendous power of religious outlooks in the Muslim world—outlooks that sometimes conflict with one another.

This approach is not likely to be fruitful unless it has the candor to acknowledge the taking of military action was premature and begun without any apparent awareness of the sectarian problems in Iraq that might develop. To take action in the world, whether military or diplomatic in nature, without careful inquiry into the historical, political, and religious circumstances that will be encountered is naïve at best and culpable at worst. Without acknowledging that fact, any attempts to deal with a situation through incremental change are likely to be unsuccessful. As the resolution and this paper maintain, those who have gravely erred must repent before they can attain newness of life or undo the consequences of the actions they have taken.

Helping the Iraqis to “stand up” will have moral legitimacy only if accompanied by diplomatic and restorative efforts, including an effort to demilitarize the situation and a clear declaration of the intention to withdraw from Iraq in the foreseeable future. It is far from clear this is what is being contemplated by some of those who use this descriptive phrase. For instance, the Americans have been arming Sunni insurgents in order to attack terrorist insurgents. This has offended the Shi’ite dominated government and is likely to intensify the possibility of intergroup conflict rather than reduce it.⁴⁹ It represents a manipulation of armed force that is highly opportunistic and hardly leads to “standing up” in ways that will result in peaceful security in the region. Moreover, despite legislation disclaiming permanent bases, presidential signing statements indicate that the administration sees “enduring” bases, hardly convincing evidence of an intention to withdraw.

4. **Inter-religious Understanding and Joint Christian Muslim Peacemaking:** With regard to the religious factors, no strategy will ever be successful unless it is undertaken with a clear awareness of the ways in which religion functions in Mid-Eastern societies. Much more is needed than a bland disclaimer that Islam is not an evil religion. Ways must be found to reach out to those elements in Islam that are dedicated to dialogue and interaction with other groups—both within their own heritage and beyond—which are engaged in peacemaking. To utilize religious forces constructively in a situation like Iraq may be the greatest challenge of all—but the situation will never improve until ways are found to do this. The Pentagon is hardly the most qualified agency to undertake this task. “Standing down” must consist of much more than diminishing military force; it must include changing attitudes and building structures of peaceful existence.

We must respond thoughtfully, humbly, and with great appreciation for the initiative taken on October 11, 2007, by a group of 138 Muslim leaders to seek common ground between their tradition and the Christian West. The preparation of that document was coordinated by Jordan’s Royal Institute of Islamic Thought. It “acknowledges that some Muslims ‘relish conflict and destruction for their own sake or reckon that ultimately they stand to gain’ from violence ...” and urges the two traditions to work together to seek peace.⁵⁰ For any such interchange to be fruitful, it will be necessary for Christians to be as candid about the belligerency sometimes expressed in their name as the Muslims have been about the problems they face in their group. The great challenge is to have such dialogue affect the general public in ways that eventually have positive consequences in the political sphere.

5. **The Partition Option—Extreme De-centralization:** Still another suggestion for dealing with the turmoil in Iraq is to partition the country into three sections according to the ethnic/religious identity dominant in each. Some observers of the situation in Iraq believe this is an eventual necessity. The U.S. Senate in an early October 2007 action sponsored by Senators Biden and Brownback has by a vote of 75–33 given weight to this idea by declaring Iraq is broken beyond repair. This suggestion seems plausible on the surface and obviously attracts support. But other persons familiar with Iraq doubt this course of action is either possible or wise. Joshua Holland, a writer on the AlterNet staff, and Raed Jamar, consultant on Iraq to the American Friends Service Committee, have sharply criticized this proposal. They argue that most Iraqis still desire to live in mixed neighborhoods rather than in neat enclaves, that an attempt to divide the area would produce great hardship and also open the way to even more ethnic conflict than has already happened in the area.⁵¹ While the Kurds have effectively adopted this strategy in much of “their” territory, to embrace this idea without the benefit of careful scrutiny and debate may be to grasp at straws. In the name decreasing violence it may lead to even more violence and the virtual removal of religious minorities—like Christians, Mandeans, and Yadhzis.

6. **Transition toward UN-linked internationalization:** This approach to dealing with the turmoil in Iraq would use the United Nations in an expanded way. The United Nations has already had a role in Iraq. On August 10, 2007, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 1770 extending the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) for twelve months and de-linking UNAIM from the resolution authorizing the use of multinational force in Iraq (the current coalition arrangement—though the U.S. is virtually the only country now represented). The UN is authorized to facilitate efforts at dialogue and reconciliation between groups dealing with border issues, energy, and refugees, to help the Iraqi government provide essential services, and to aid in the implementation of humanitarian assistance. Providing such relief services is an enormous task, and may not be adequate but nevertheless it might affect the political situation even if not deliberately intending to do so.

Asking the United Nations to deal with the turmoil would possibly remove the United States from being viewed as the primary actor without merely withdrawing and dumping the entire task of overcoming the turmoil onto a fledgling government. This approach would not be easy to implement because it would require the admission that the largely (if not essentially total) unilateral action by the United States has been wrong and that our nation has done a number of things to weaken

the United Nations—though we advocate precisely that difficult repentance and truth-telling. Clearly, only by strengthening and bolstering the resources of the United Nations would such a policy be feasible. It would most likely also require the creation of an international peace force acceptable to the Iraqi people to replace the approximately 160,000 American and less than 7,000 British troops in the area. Some people think that the creation of such a force and its acceptance by groups in Iraq is possible; others do not. It would also involve launching a Global Marshall Plan to rebuild Iraq and other areas that have suffered—a plan that would be very costly. For awhile Iraq might even be a protectorate of the United Nations.

Much of what has happened in taking military action against Iraq has represented a repudiation of internationalism, replacing the role of the United Nations with a “coalition of the willing.” The latter, as a creation of the United States, was not a genuine international group. To take action under the pervasive influence of one or two countries is not to advance international responsibility. To move toward a much more decisive role for the United Nations would be neither easy nor cheap. Many pressures on the United Nations make this difficult. But to move in this direction would be consistent with policies long supported by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and ignored or neglected by the current American administration. This would be a major challenge to the United Nations itself, but to accept such a challenge might provide a significant opportunity for this international body to demonstrate its potential value for solving a very major matter.

To the extent that making policy involves moral considerations, it can be fruitful only if done by persons self-critical of their own limitations, and able to interact respectfully with others. Thus, while the resolution and study paper favor this last approach, we do not minimize its difficulties.

VI. Resources for Further Christian Witness

There are several ways in which Christian faith can help to create the conditions that make it possible to act with wisdom and poise in dealing with public issues such as the turmoil in Iraq. As Christians we recognize that all forms of domination, whether deliberately intended or simply the consequences of being in a position of preeminence, create the potential for resentment and have the power to corrupt those who possess them. We, therefore, witness to a concept of responsible servanthood that eschews the use of power as a club with which to make others conform to our conception of righteousness. On our best days we know that empire building—even if done with noble intentions and professions of compassion—is contrary to the proper role of nations within the global community. We reject the premise that the chief vocation of the strong is to compel others to conform to their will. We are committed to cooperative internationalism despite the difficulties it faces. We know that evil cannot be quashed once and for all by some heroic venture—a stance that tempts the strong rather than the weak, those who are morally earnest rather than those driven by doubts or even by cynicism. This basic conviction informs important stances for dealing with the troubling vicissitudes of history.

1. In the first place, mature faith helps to counter fear. Fear is a normal human experience but it often throws responses to threatening circumstances off balance and can be used to prompt people to act against perceived dangers with inordinate zeal and even catastrophic excess. Most resorts to violence are prompted by fear. In the case of preventive uses of military power, fear of what might happen overrides the assessment of what is actually taking place. Judicious caution is legitimate—nobody is compelled to be foolish—but to engage deliberately in the creation of fear, to imagine scenarios that are artificially dire, and to suggest that such threats can only be eliminated by the use of violence, is to set aside all of the wise cautions that make interactions between human being potentially creative. A major contribution of religion to social well-being is to enable people to deal with circumstances without being blinded by fear. By urging believers to “Be Not Afraid,” the Scripture helps to counter the pressures that so readily escalate into paranoid behavior. In this we echo the 2003 statement of the General Assembly responding to the instrumental use of “9/11,” understanding that any new instance of terrorism will tempt our society to seek immediate retaliation by military means, however focused or justified.

It is because people are afraid that they may, for example, accept the suspension of freedoms and invite governmental action that violates cherished liberties. It is because politicians are afraid of being soft on defense that they vote for belligerent actions they may well understand to be dangerous. The inability of the American political system to come to some decisive program for dealing with Iraq may well be a result of the fear that many politicians have of being charged with being softheaded about dealing with troublemakers in the world. Those who purvey fear work the system to their advantage as long as such fears are present and as long as the public has acquired no source of confidence with which to offset them. We believe the Christian faith is that source.

2. A second contribution that faith can make to the creation of a culture that can deal with antagonism and hostility is to keep communication open—even when it simply reveals the persistence of disagreements and the depth of hostilities. Nothing is resolved by a posture of apartheid that deems all interchanges with enemies as weakness and all diplomatic communication as futile. The tensions of the world cannot be relieved by not engaging in conversations with those whose actions are regarded as contemptible. Refusal to talk is not an effective way of exercising power or influence but a form of petulant behavior. To be sure, such interchanges are never likely to be easy and are often bound to be futile. They often demand inordinate patience and great care not to make unjustified concessions to the viewpoint of the antagonists. As children we were advised to heed the ditty, “Sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” In the current situation we

find great scorn heaped on those who engage certain parties verbally and are condemned for doing so. If we are able to talk only with our friends, what reward have we? Do not even the most malicious actors in the world do the same?

Genuine dialogue does not depend on scrubbing out differences. It does, however, require care not to use inflammatory words, like World War Three (or World War Four). It is hindered by language that categorizes groups or nations under the rubric “good” or “evil.” Policy differences must be fairly described and dangerous intentions identified, but with a care that avoids bombast and a courtesy that is a distinguishing quality of mature diplomacy. Neither is keeping conversations open aided by shifting treatments of other groups—utilizing them as allies in one set of circumstances and castigating them as enemies at another time. The record of the United States in dealing with the Arab world is replete with such vacillation, not least in the case of both Iraq and Iran. We must aim to treat others with long-range consistency that does not provoke them to regard our motives as opportunistic. Doublespeak is about as bad as not being willing to talk at all.

3. A third contribution of mature religious faith to international affairs is a willingness to acknowledge that our actions have been wrong—that we must repent and act differently. The examples that Donald Shriver identifies on the national level and that David Little and colleagues identify on a personal level, both give us encouragement. We think the truth is that we are citizens of a nation that has been guilty of miscalculation and of illegitimate self-confidence bordering on arrogance. We are all participants in tragic consequence even if from the beginning we have opposed what has happened. The means that the major need of the present is to acknowledge the wrong that has resulted from what we have done even though we have not intended those consequences to happen. We need to seek forgiveness, pursue attempts at reconciliation, and repudiate the central premises of a policy that has pursued domination under the cloak of idealistic intentions. Going through this process is essential to any newness of life, but however painful and difficult it may be for us, it will many times more so for the Iraqis—and we owe them more than we know. A logistical withdrawal of troops will be difficult and hazardous enough, but it may turn out more possible than the task of reconsidering America’s national destiny. Yet unless we begin to do the latter, we may not do the former seriously—in which case, there will be the stronger possibility that our nation will go down in history as another ignoble empire that reaps the consequences of pretending to be invincibly strong and morally unique.

Endnotes

1. John Tirman, “Counting Iraqi Casualties—and a Media Controversy,” posted on www.johntirman.com, February 14, 2008. Tirman is Executive Director and Principal Research Scientist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s Center for International Studies. It is well known that the U.S. military and Provisional Authority determined not to count civilian deaths. Tirman’s article and departmental website, <http://mit.edu/humancostiraq>, review several ways of calculating the Iraqi death toll, from “Iraqi Body Count,” which uses English language reports and tends to smaller numbers (47,668 persons up to June 2006, for example), to a survey by “the private UK firm, Opinion Business Research (ORB), (which) found more than one million dead Iraqis” (by January 2008). He backs the work of the Johns Hopkins epidemiologists over criticisms of their work in the *National Journal*: “Their survey of 1,850 households resulted in a shocking number: 600,000 dead by violence in the first 40 months of the war. The survey was extensively peer reviewed and published in the British medical journal, *The Lancet*, in October 2006.” Prof. Tirman also critiques the 400,000 figure produced by the Iraqi Health Ministry (then controlled by Moktada al Sadr), which “shows a flat rate for killings throughout the war” (inconsistent with news reports). The World Health Organization, however, conducted a study of the period from March 2003 to June 2006, a similar period to the Hopkins study. *The New York Times* said that its study “indicated with a 95% degree of certainty that between 104,000 and 223,000 civilians had died” (“W.H.O. says Iraq Civilian Death Toll Higher Than Cited,” by Lawrence K. Altman and Richard A. Ooppel Jr., January 10, 2008, p. A12.). As for the U.S. decision not to count Iraqi casualties, “Soon after the formal end of the short 2003 invasion, the surviving Iraqi Ministry of Health proposed investigating the number of Iraqi dead, but on December 10, 2003, the American authority in Baghdad ordered a stop to the investigation...” in *Honest Patriots: Loving a Country Enough to Remember its Misdeeds* by Donald W. Shriver, Jr. (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2005), p. 270.
2. This point is drawn from the General Assembly’s 2004 Resolution, “Iraq: Our Responsibility and the Future,” p. 15 in the printed booklet (also available to download at www.pcusa.org/acswp)
3. Gary Dorrien, “Crossroads in Iraq: Politics, Strategic Options, Ethics,” September, 2007, p. 5.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 11. See also Edward L. Long Jr. *Facing Terrorism: Responding as Christians* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2004), pp. 81–85. Long says, “A system of criminal justice aims to curtail and manage wrongdoing, holding it to tolerable limits. Military action often aims at eliminating wrongdoers, wiping them off the face of the earth rather than limiting or changing their behavior. Law enforcement does not seek “victories” in the same sense as does warfare,” p. 84.
5. The concept of “full spectrum dominance” comes from the Department of Defense’s mid-2002 publication, Joint Vision 2020 (www.dtic.mil/jointvision), “the creation of a force that is dominant across the full spectrum of military operations—persuasive in peace, decisive in war, preeminent in any form of conflict.” The General Assembly’s 2003 Resolution, “Iraq and Beyond,” includes an assessment of this significant change in U.S. military doctrine, with its determination, “given the global nature of our interests and obligations, [that] the United States must maintain its overseas presence forces and the ability to project power worldwide...” (cited in the 2003 Resolution, reprinted as Appendix A in booklet, “Iraq: Our Responsibility and the Future,” op.cit. at note 10.)
6. Human Rights Watch describes waterboarding as “a form of mock drowning that causes severe physical suffering in the form of reflexive choking, gagging, and the feeling of suffocation.” Human Rights Watch, “Human Rights Watch’s Submission to the Commit-

tee Against Torture in Response to United States Positions Expressed During the Committee's Consideration of the Second Periodic Report of the United States on May 5 and May 8, 2006," http://hrw.org/us/hrw_response_051706.pdf.

7. The judgment that the war was "unwise, immoral, and illegal," is contained in "Iraq: Our Responsibility and the Future" (2004; available from Presbyterian Distribution Services: PDS #68-600-05-002, or downloadable at www.pcusa.org/acswp). The study of "Violence, Religion, and Terrorism" also resulted in a resolution of that name in 2004 (PDS #70-270-04-025), building on papers published in *Church & Society* magazine by a working group of Presbyterian ethicists, pastors, and two military officers (back issues of the magazine remain available on the Web: www.pcusa.org/church&society).
8. The International Republican Institute (<http://www.iri.org/mena/iraq/2006-07-19-IraqPoll.asp>) provides poll data since the invasion showing a commitment to national unity. Their July 19, 2006, data shows "seventy-eight percent strongly disagree or disagree with the idea of segregating Iraq according to religious or ethnic sects." The Global Policy Institute presents a survey of poll results on the occupation from 2003–2007, with some interpretation as to events affecting fluctuations in public opinion (<http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/issues/iraq/pollindex.htm>). The Iraq Study Group Report, p. 29, gives perhaps the most graphic poll number, that 61% of respondents supported attacks on U.S. forces, though the desire for restored Iraqi sovereignty is not always linked to a national unity government.
9. Gary Dorrien, "After the Surge," *The Christian Century*, Oct. 30, 2007, p. 9. Dorrien summarizes the position of the major Democratic candidates following the Baker-Hamilton model: "the U.S. to pull back, leaving air, ground and naval deployments in Kuwait, Bahrain and other bases in the Middle East while maintaining some residual U.S. forces in Iraq to fight terrorism and stabilize the Kurdish region." Dorrien himself favors a return to the main 1980's policy of relying on naval power and bases outside the Middle East.
10. "US War Costs in Iraq Up: Report" by *Reuters*, edited by Howard Goller and Doina Chiacu, January 23, 2008. "War funding, which averaged about \$93 billion a year from 2003 through 2005, rose to \$120 billion in 2006 and \$171 billion in 2007 and President George W. Bush has asked for \$193 billion in 2008, the nonpartisan (Congressional Budget) office wrote." As of February 2008, the article states that there are "around 158,000 U.S. troops in Iraq and 27,000 in Afghanistan."
11. "Proposed Military Spending Is Highest Since WWII," by Thom Shanker, *The New York Times*, February 4, 2008. For the current accounts deficit number, Chalmers Johnson cites the CIA's "World Factbook" in his *TomDispatch* web-article, "Going Bankrupt: Why the Debt Crisis is Now the Greatest Threat to the American Republic," January 22, 2008, p. 2. The role of oil in the recession is emphasized in "Barreling into Recession: How Oil Burst the American Bubble," by Michael T. Klare, also in *TomDispatch.com*, February 1, 2008: "In 1998, the United States paid approximately \$45 billion for its imported oil; in 2007, that bill is likely to have reached \$400 billion or more. That constitutes the single largest contribution to America's balance-of-payments deficit and a substantial transfer of wealth from the U.S. economy to those of oil-producing nations. This, in turn, helped weaken the value of the dollar in relation to key foreign currencies, especially the euro and the Japanese yen, boosting the cost of other imported foreign goods and so threatening to fuel inflation at home."
12. In the research databank, *False Pretenses*, Charles Lewis and Mark Reading-Smith of the Center for Public Integrity (www.publicintegrity.org/warcard) summarize, "President George Bush and seven of his administration's top officials, including Vice President Dick Cheney, National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, made at least 935 false statements in the two years following September 11, 2001, about the national security threat posed by Saddam Hussein's Iraq On at least 532 separate occasions ... [these figures] stated unequivocally that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction (or was trying to produce or obtain them), links to Al Qaeda, or both."
13. Donald W. Shriver, Jr. *An Ethic For Enemies: Forgiveness in Politics* (Oxford: Oxford and New York, 1995). This is not solely a phenomenon in societies influenced by Christianity (as in South Africa, Northern Ireland, Central Europe)—although progress in East Timor, Cambodia, and Nepal, for example, has proven fragile
14. Michael Schwartz, "Iraq's Tidal Wave of Misery," (*TomDispatch*—online, Feb 10, 2008), p. 3; "The United States, which accepted about 20,000 Iraqi refugees during Saddam Hussein's years, admitted 463 additional ones between the start of the war and mid-2007." This contrasts starkly with the numbers being accepted by Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Iran, and even Lebanon.
15. The Iraq Study Group report is available on the website of the U.S. Institute for Peace which was among the bodies assisting the ten member bipartisan committee. It may be noted that Presbyterian Representative Frank Wolf (R-Virginia) was the legislator who obtained funds for this valuable study. The web-address is: www.usip.org/isp/iraq_study_group_report/report/1206/index.html.
16. This quote is from Madeleine K. Albright, Secretary of State in the Clinton Administration, quoted in Mark Lewis Taylor, *Religion, Politics, and the Christian Right* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), p. 64, though the 2004 General Assembly resolution, *Iraq: Our Responsibility and the Future*, notes her early opposition to the war, in "Bridges, Bombs, or Bluster?," *Foreign Affairs* (September 2003), pp. 3–19.
17. Gary Dorrien, *Imperial Designs: Neoconservatism and the New Pax Americana* (New York: Routledge, 2004) p. 17 (also quoted, Mark Lewis Taylor, *ibid.*, p. 65)
18. Richard Clarke, *Against All Enemies* (New York: Free Press, 2004), p. 32, tells of how on September 12, 2001, when Al Qaeda has clearly been identified, the president is already asking, "See if Saddam did this. See if he's linked in any way. ..."
19. Ulrich Mauser, *The Gospel of Peace: A Scriptural Message for Today's World* (Louisville: Westminster/JohnKnox, 1992), pp. 55, 57, 48.

20. The Peacemaking Program has produced a series of booklets on the place of peace in many books of the Bible.
21. Walter Wink, *When the Powers Fall* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), p. 4.
22. Donald W. Shriver, Jr. *An Ethic For Enemies: Forgiveness in Politics* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) p. 49ff.
23. Ibid. p. 113.
24. Donald W. Shriver, Jr. *Honest Patriots: Loving a Country Enough to Remember Its Misdeeds* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 281.
25. An insightful psychological look at the lures and shadows of greatness is Robert L. Moore's *Facing the Dragon: Confronting Personal and Spiritual Grandiosity* (Wilmette, IL: Chiron, 2003). Agreeing with Scott Peck on the links between evil and narcissism and lack of empathy, he does not see these limited to a relative few, "people of the lie," but rather—through cultural projections—as temptations for whole societies.
26. Robert Woodward, *State of Denial* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006).
27. *Peacemakers in Action: Profiles of Religion in Conflict Resolution*, edited by David Little. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 434.
28. Ibid. pp. 442–44.
29. The background paper was printed, together with the text of the comment by the World Ministries Division of the General Assembly Council, by the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy with a study guide developed by Edward LeRoy Long Jr., as Presbyterian Distribution Services Item #68-600-03-005.
30. The background paper and the policy recommendations of the 2004 General Assembly were printed by the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy, also with a study guide by Edward LeRoy Long, Jr. (Assisted by Victor Makari) as Presbyterian Distribution Service Item #68-600-05-002.
31. An example of such criticism is the book *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* by Thomas E. Ricks. (New York: The Penguin Press, 2006).
32. For a thoughtful and balanced discussion of this and other arguments for and against taking military action in Iraq see *Faith and Force: A Christian Debate About War* by David L. Clough and Brian Stiltner. (Washington, D.C: Georgetown University Press, 2007), 188–204.
33. "Just Peacemaking and the Call for International Intervention for Humanitarian Rescue" (*Minutes*, 1998, Part I, pp. 75, 445–61). This PC(USA) resolution includes the "just peace" steps that build proactively on "just war" thinking. The case for intervention out of a "responsibility to protect," in the UN's language, reflects experiences of the failure to protect Tutsis in Rwanda and the relative success of even late intervention in Bosnia and Kosovo. Concern for genocide in "failed states" continues to offer an argument for armed intervention, but this has not come to pass in the Sudan.
34. Greenspan's exact wording is as follows: "I am saddened that it is politically inconvenient to acknowledge what everyone knows: the Iraq war is largely about oil," *The Age of Turbulence: Adventures in a New World*, New York: The Penguin Press, 2007, 463. A more detailed analysis of the role that American interest in Iraqi oil is the driving force behind the war can be found in an article by Jim Holt entitled "It's the Oil." *London Review of Books*. Volume 29, Number 20 (October 8, 3007). According to Holt, the administration actually hopes that the war will continue as a means of legitimizing continued American presence in the region in order to safeguard the availability of the oil and the economic interests of American corporations in obtaining it.
35. "If the Bush administration's agenda meshes almost completely with that of the Israeli right's, it's partly because the same thinkers laid the foundations for both governments' policies. ... some of the Bush Administration's current ideas about military preemption and regime change in Iraq echo a 1996 policy paper called "A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm," authored by a group including Richard Perle, currently a Pentagon advisor, and Douglas Feith, now undersecretary of policy at the US Department of Defense. Written for the incoming government of Benjamin Netanyahu, the paper argues that Israel should scrap the peace process, work to subdue its neighbors by force, and overthrow the Iraqi government in order to reshape the region's dynamics." Michelle Goldberg, "Why American Jewish Groups Support War with Iraq," *Salon.com*, September 14, 2002.
36. Among the books most targeted on the Iraq war are: Jim Mann *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet* (NY: Penguin, 2004), Gary Dorrien *Imperial Designs: Neoconservatism and the New Pax Americana* (NY: Routledge, 2004) and most recently Jacob Heilbrunn *They Knew They Were Right: The Rise of the Neoconservatives* (NY: Random House/Doubleday, 2008). Norman Podhoretz and Irving Kristol were influential thinkers for the group; Paul Wolfowitz among the most influential; Michael Lind and Francis Fukuyama now number among the ex-neocon's criticizing the group for its overreach.
37. Charles Krauthammer, "The Unipolar Moment Revisited," *National Interest* 70 (Winter 2002/3), pages 14, 17, quoted in Dorrien, *Imperial Designs*, p. 113.

38. Dorrien, *ibid.*, p. 157.
39. The National Security Archive located at George Washington University is at Website: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB198/index.htm>.
40. Democratic Principles Working Group, "Final Report on the Transition to Democracy in Iraq," November 2002, p. 5 (of 98). See National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 198, introduced by Farrah Hassen, posted September 1, 2006.
41. Eric Schmitt and Joel Brinkley, "Pre-invasion Plans Sidelined," *The New York Times*, October 13, 2003.
42. The action of the General Assembly has been printed in a pamphlet made available by the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy with the title *Resolution Against Torture: Human Rights in a Time of Terrorism; A Call for a Commission of Inquiry*, 2006.
43. Dorrien, *op. cit.* p. 250, drawing on investigative reports.
44. "Going It Too Much Alone," by Jerry Van Marter, Presbyterian News Service (November 6, 2007) www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2007/07724.htm
45. Dorrien, "Crossroads in Iraq: Politics, Strategic Options, Ethics." September 2007 unpublished paper.
46. See "The Evangelical Crackup." by David D. Kirkpatrick. *The New York Times Magazine*. October 28, 2007, 38–45. 60, 64, and 66.
47. Professor Paul Krugman has argued there is no such thing as Islamofascism. See "Fearing Fear Itself," *The New York Times* October 29, 2007, A23.
48. Norman Podhoretz, *World War IV: The Long Struggle Against Islamofascism*. (New York: Doubleday, 2007).
49. See "After the Surge: Getting Out of Iraq," by Gary Dorrien in *The Christian Century*. (October 30, 2007), 8–9.
50. See "Muslims Point to Common Ground," *The Christian Century*, Volume 124, Number 23 (November 13, 2007), 12f. The letter can be viewed at www.acommonword.com and a response from people at Yale Divinity School at www.yale.edu/faith/about-commonword.htm.
51. The internet entry by Holland and Jarrar is dated October 15, 2007, and found on AlterNet.org. Support for the idea of dividing Iraq is found in an article by Peter W. Galbraith, former United States ambassador to Croatia in an OpEd piece in *The New York Times* October 23, 2007.

COGA AND GAC COMMENT ON ITEM 11-24

Comment on Item 11-24—From the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA) and the General Assembly Council (GAC).

In order to be good stewards of our resources, the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly and the General Assembly Council urge the 218th General Assembly (2008) not to make exceptions to Standing Rule H.2.a.(12).

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly and the General Assembly Council remind commissioners and advisory delegates of Standing Rule H.2.a.(12), which reads: "(12) As soon as practicable after the adjournment of the General Assembly, the Stated Clerk shall publish the assembly's proceedings and other documents as the assembly may direct in an appropriate format (i.e. print or electronic) to be determined by the Stated Clerk."

This rule was added to *Manual of the General Assembly* several years ago to help control expenses and maximize distribution of documents.

If the General Assembly decides to make an exception to the rule, it will be necessary for the assembly to suspend the Standing Rules, which requires a 2/3 affirmative vote of the total enrollment of commissioners.

Item 11-25

[The assembly answered Item 11-25 by the action taken on Item 11-06. See pp. 45, 47.]

On Becoming Non-Partisan Advocates for Peace—From the Presbytery of Santa Barbara.

The Presbytery of Santa Barbara overtures the 218th General Assembly (2008) to