

Church Leaders' Inaugural Letter to President Bush

~January 21, 2005~

This letter, and a copy of the full page ad that appeared in the New York Times January 21, 2005, is being delivered to key officials in the Administration and to all Representatives and Senators. Individuals are invited to add their name to the open letter.

January 21, 2005

The Honorable George W. Bush

The White House

Washington, DC

Dear Mr. President:

As leaders of Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant Churches and Christian organizations with millions of members across the country, we encourage you to lead a political process that will end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As you begin your second term, the vision of a two-state solution is coming back into focus after having faded into obscurity. Will Palestinians finally be free? Will Israelis be secure at last? As people of faith and hope, we say yes!

This is the time for you and for the 109th Congress, and for friends of Israel and Palestine, to have the courage to be peacemakers, and to press both Israelis and Palestinians to seize the future; where each recognizes the other's right to exist and is willing to work together for security and economic well-being.

For the sake of our own country as well, Mr. President, we appeal to you. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has become a threat to the people of the United States. Every day the conflict continues, hatred of the United States government is fueled. With each news report of Palestinian suffering -- whether the death of an innocent child, the demolition of a family's home, or the confiscation of farmland for the separation barrier -- popular support in Arab and Muslim countries for terrorism grows and the threat of attacks directed at the United States increases. The continuing conflict has also resulted in suffering and loss of life among Israeli citizens. We want Israelis, too, to live without fear or threat in their own country.

A hallmark of your campaign was the commitment to defeat terror and make our country more secure. We believe that the promise of peace in Jerusalem is the best defense against terrorism. We encourage you to maintain the faith, the courage and the resolve to work with other world leaders toward negotiations that guarantee two viable states, Israel and Palestine, living side-by-side and sharing Jerusalem as their capital.

Finally, Mr. President, we urge you to follow the examples of the great prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah, who declared that God calls all nations and all people to do justice to one another. We join you in praying for peace in the Holy Land and at home.

Sincerely,

Rev. Dr. Leonard B. Bjorkman

Co-Moderator

Presbyterian Peace Fellowship

Marilyn Borst

Director, Global Ministry
Peachtree Presbyterian Church, Atlanta

Simone Campbell, SSS

National Coordinator

NETWORK

Anthony Campolo

President, Evangelical Association for the Promotion of Education

Br. Kevin Cawley
Deputy Province Leader
Eastern American Province
Christian Brothers

Sister Ardis Cloutier, OSF
Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, MN

Marie Dennis
Director
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

Christopher J. Doyle
President/CEO
American Leprosy Missions
Rev. Robert Edgar
General Secretary
National Council of Churches USA

Beatrice Eichten, OSF
Vice President
Leadership Conference of Women Religious

Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson
General Secretary
Reformed Church in America

Anne Griffis
Chair, Action/Global Concerns
Church Women United

The Most Rev. Frank T. Griswold
Presiding Bishop
The Episcopal Church in America

The Rev. Mark S. Hanson

Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

The Rev. Dr. Stan Haste

Alliance of Baptists

Rev. Wm. Chris Hobgood
General Minister and President
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Rev. Kathryn J. Johnson

Executive Director

Methodist Federation for Social Action

The Rev. Phil Jones

Director

Brethren Witness/Washington Office

Mor Cyril Aphrem Karim

Archbishop

Archdiocese of the Syrian Orthodox Church

Ted Keating, SM

Executive Director

Conference of Major Superiors of Men

Rev. Dr. Clifton Kirkpatrick

Stated Clerk
Presbyterian Church (USA)

Abbot Jerome Kodell, OSB

Subiaco Abbey

Thomas Krosnicki, SVD

Provincial

Society of the Divine Word (Chicago)

Donald A. Kruse

Vice-president, Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation (HCEF)

Rev. Michael E. Livingston

Executive Director

International Council of Community Churches

Dr. Ronald J.R. Mathies

Executive Director

Mennonite Central Committee

Joellen McCarthy, BVM

Peggy Nolan, BVM

Mary Ann Zollmann, BVM

Leadership Team

Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Rev. John L. McCullough

Executive Director & CEO

Church World Service

Mary Ellen McNish

General Secretary

American Friends Service Committee

A. Roy Medley

General Secretary

American Baptist Churches, U.S.A.

Joseph Nangle, OFM

Franciscan Mission Service

Ron Nikkel

President

Prison Fellowship International

Rateb Y. Rabie, KHS

President, Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation (HCEF)

Leonard Rodgers
President/Founder
Venture International

Andrew Ryskamp
Executive Director, Christian Reformed
World Relief Committee-US

Metropolitan Philip Saliba
Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese

Rev. Cheryl J. Sanders, Th.D.
Senior Pastor
Third Street Church of God, Washington, D.C.

Dr. Robert E. Sawyer
Moravian Church Southern Province

Amb. Robert A. Seiple
Founder/Chair
Institute for Global Engagement.

Carole Shinnick, SSND
Executive Director
Leadership Conference of Women Religious

Ronald J. Sider
President
Evangelicals for Social Action

Rev. William G. Sinkford
President
Unitarian Universalist Association
of Congregations

James W. Skillen
President

Center for Public Justice

Glen Stassen

Lewis B. Smedes Professor of Christian Ethics

Fuller Theological Seminary

Richard E. Stearns

President

World Vision

Msgr. Archimandrite Robert L. Stern

Secretary General

Catholic Near East Welfare Association

Rev. John H. Thomas

General Minister and President

United Church of Christ

The Rev. Canon Richard Toll

Friends of Sabeel-North America

Christine Vladimiroff, OSB

President

Leadership Conference of Women Religious

Joe Volk

Executive Secretary

Friends Committee on National Legislation

Rev. Dr. Donald E. Wagner

Professor

North Park University, Chicago.

Jim Wallis

Executive Director

Sojourners

Corinne Whittlatch

Executive Director

Churches for Middle East Peace

James Winkler

General Secretary

General Board of Church & Society

United Methodist Church

Bishop Gabino Zavala

Bishop President

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