



Church of the Brethren General Board

A Resolution on the Events and Aftermath of September 11, 2001

October 22, 2001

*“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”
Ps. 46:1*

We live in a world where violence is a daily reality for millions of people. In the events of September 11, 2001, the people of the United States had a direct encounter with violence of a horrific nature. With others across our nation and around the world, the Church of the Brethren General Board grieves over this shocking loss of life, offers its prayerful support to the families and friends of the victims, and has taken steps to reach out to our neighbors in ministries of service and comfort.

*“Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all.”
Romans 12:17*

We believe that peace and security will not be found through military, economic, and political reprisal, or in the drastic curtailment of civil liberties in the United States. These avenues may satisfy the desire for retaliation and the appearance of greater security, but in the long term they can neither change the conditions that give rise to terrorist impulses nor eradicate the threat of terrorist attack. The perpetrators of acts such as these should be held accountable for their deeds. However, their apprehension and prosecution should be carried out within the rule of applicable law, without the loss of additional lives.

*“He has told you, O mortal, what is good, and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice,
and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.”
Micah 6:8*

We see it incumbent upon our nation and upon us as a church to seek to understand the roots of the anger and hatred harbored against the United States. There may always be those whose religious or political extremism leads them to acts of violence. However, the seed-bed for the recruitment of large movements of extremists lies in ongoing social, economic, and political realities that can and must be recognized and addressed. This path holds the greatest promise for peace for the people of our nation and for people everywhere.

*“Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth.”
Ps. 46:10*

Therefore:

- We urge church leaders and congregations to create opportunities for persons to grieve this and all acts of violence and to purposefully seek how God is speaking to us at this time.

*“You shall not murder.” Exodus 20:13; “Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God.”
Romans 12:19*

- We call for the immediate cessation of military action against the nation of Afghanistan. We are deeply concerned that these strikes will cause further death and destruction, and will exacerbate the problems confronting those working to feed and care for millions of suffering Afghan people. We also urge the U.S. government to refrain from similar military strikes against other nations.

*“When was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you or naked and gave you clothing?” And the King will answer them
‘Truly, I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these, who are members of my family, you did it to me.’
Matthew 25:37-40*

- We are troubled by humanitarian aid that is distributed in inappropriate and potentially damaging ways. It is not appropriate for food aid to be used for political or public relations purposes. By virtue of the way in which the aid is being delivered, we are concerned that it will not go to those in most need, but to militias who are most capable of controlling access to the aid. We are concerned that mixing humanitarian assistance with military maneuvers will undermine the credibility of the aid and make future efforts to deliver aid problematic. We commit ourselves to assisting the people of Afghanistan with emergency aid and longer-term food relief that is appropriate to their needs and culture, and provided according to humanitarian principles and Christian values of service, compassion, and mutuality.

*“They have treated the wound of my people carelessly, saying, ‘Peace, peace,’ when there is no peace.”
Jeremiah 6:14*

- We call on the U.S. government and on our churches to give greater attention to global inequities in quality of life. The Bible warns that when injustice prevails, societies totter and eventually collapse. If we want peace, we must recognize and repent of our role in this inequity and truly work for justice in the global community.

*“In everything do to others as you would have them do unto you; for this is the law and the prophets.”
Matthew 7:12*

- We reaffirm our prophetic witness to our government and its foreign policy priorities. Too often our nation acts solely from short-term self-interest, promoting our support of authoritarian regimes in other parts of the world. For example, we are concerned that the decades-long suffering of the people of Sudan will be forgotten in our nation’s efforts to keep the government of Sudan in the coalition against terrorism. Jesus’ call to seek the welfare of others and his unflinching advocacy for the least and last in society must guide us in our personal and international dealings.

*“If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.”
Romans 12:18*

- We seek fuller understanding of the world’s religious diversity. Though religion is subverted by some to support the aims of those bent on hatred and violence, all the world’s great religious traditions carry within them a strong call for compassion and tolerance of others. Christians must actively pursue dialog with people of varying faith traditions, build common bonds of friendship, and work together to seek peace. This must begin in our own communities, but should extend outward to the global neighborhood.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”
Matthew 5:8

- We challenge ourselves to a sacrificial commitment to Christ’s way of peace. Creating a world of peace and security for all is a monumental task—one that can only be undertaken through the empowerment of God’s Spirit and with the extraordinary commitment of God’s people. We call on our congregations and members to recommit themselves to seeking peace in their daily lives and relationships, to reaffirm the historic Church of the Brethren objection to war, to prayerfully consider their loyalties to their nation in light of their prior loyalty to God, to work for justice in the global community, and to creatively and nonviolently challenge the prevailing belief that the application of force is the path to enduring peace.

“Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.”
I John 3:18

We are called to act in this time as we do in every time, renewing our own commitment to the way of Jesus Christ and to God whose love extends to all, offering ourselves through deeds of service and words of witness, working with our God to create a world without fear and without want, where “nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more, but they shall all sit under their own vines and fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid” (Micah 4:3b-4a).

Policy Background

Position and Practices of the Church of the Brethren in Relation to War, 1948 Annual Conference, Revised 1957, 1968, 1970.

Justice and Nonviolence, 1977 Annual Conference

A Quest for Order, 1987 Annual Conference

Covert Operations and Covert War, 1988 Annual Conference

Nonviolence and Humanitarian Intervention, 1996 Annual Conference