



Mennonite
Church
USA

Prayers and Petitions: A Call for Advent Prayer and Action

*“...in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving,
present your requests to God...”*

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Our hearts ache as we continue to long for peace. Whether you are reminded of this longing by listening to news of increasing violence in our world or the approaching Advent of Christ, let us join together in praying and acting for peace this Christmas. Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Central Committee Washington Office invite you to make visible your yearning for peace by joining with Mennonite Church USA congregations across the country, praying and petitioning for peace on Dec. 2, 2007.

We believe that prayer changes us and changes the world. Educational research backs this claim by showing that people who take action for peace have more hope during bleak times. Will you offer these opportunities to your congregation, this witness to your youth and children?

Maybe you've seen photos of Mennonites giving peace lamps to religious leaders in Iraq (2002) and Iran (2007), each time saying, “When you see this lamp, know that Mennonites in the United States are praying for peace between us.” We invite you and your congregation to help keep this promise by lighting a peace lamp on Dec. 2, praying for peace, and signing peace petitions to your federal legislators.

The Scripture verses used in the Leader Advent worship materials for Dec. 2 include Isaiah 2: 1-5. The prophet gives us a vision of all nations streaming to the Lord's mountain to learn God's ways, of swords being beaten into plowshares, of nations learning war no more. Marlene Kropf notes that these verses and the theme, “The world is about to turn!” offer us a compelling invitation to pray and act for peace during Advent. (As an alternative, Dec. 9 verses include the vision of the wolf and lamb living together.) On the Web site (below) you'll find ideas for fitting prayer and petition into other congregational gatherings.

To be sure each Mennonite Church USA congregation that wants a peace lamp has one, we have 100 free lamps available. Contact Susan Mark Landis (below) to reserve yours. The lamps will be UPS'd Nov. 26, so include your full contact information.

We encourage you to duplicate the attached petition and invite people in your congregation to sign it, expressing your desire for peace between the United States and Iran. Children under 18 can sign and add their ages.

Be certain everyone includes their mailing address so legislators know you are part of their constituency. Then present the petitions to your senators and representative, either in-person or by fax. Postal mail a copy to the Peace Advocate Office (below) so we can let you know many people faxed and signed petitions. (We'll send copies to the MCC Washington Office.) And please send stories from this congregational event for news articles.

Personal visits from people in your congregation to your local congressional offices during early December will be a significant witness for peace with Iraq and Iran. We will have conference calls (from 8 to 9 p.m. Eastern Nov. 20 and from 10 to 11 p.m. Eastern Nov. 27; dial-in information is on the Web site listed below) to provide tools to help you schedule and plan your visit. Perhaps a group of people from congregations in your area will simply sing 'carols' at the congressional offices and deliver the petition signatures. Perhaps a small group will schedule an appointment to talk to aides or legislators who may be home for their holiday break. Perhaps you'll deliver Christmas cookies or present a peace lamp (order 1.800.952.6670) or a quilted wall hanging. Our goal is a visible witness for peace that our congressional representatives will remember in the next months as they vote on legislation that might make more or less peace in the world.

Additional resources are available on www.MennoniteUSA.org/peace:

- worship resources,
- photos for congressional handouts or PowerPoints,
- information on contacting your legislators,
- background and information on Iraq and Iran, and
- New! Pray for Peace/Act for Peace magnets for distribution in your congregation, your Christmas cards, etc.

Friends, as the United States began building up toward a war against Iraq in September 2002, you sent 17,500 signatures asking for peace with Jim Schrag, Mennonite Church USA executive director, J. Daryl Byler, MCC Washington Office Director, and Susan Mark Landis, peace advocate, to the White House. Once again, we invite you to take a stand for peace. Will you join us?

Pray for Peace,
Act for Peace,

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This resource was created in collaboration with staff from the MCC Washington Office who contributed significantly to the ideas and content. The MCC Washington Office is a Mennonite and Brethren in Christ presence on Capitol Hill providing and encouraging prophetic witness to the way of Christ on matters of U.S. public policy.