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October 15, 2002

Mennonite Church USA congregations,

I write to you after hearing that the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate have voted to give authority to our president use force against Iraq. While we are not yet certain that the United States will attack Iraq (we continue to pray that our country will not strike first), we can be sure that relationships between our two countries have degenerated further.

Since August, over 17,000 Mennonite Church USA members endorsed a letter I sent to President Bush asking that he not lead the United States into war against Iraq. Now I invite you to take another step to act faithfully for peace. I ask you to join me in a time of prayer and fasting.

I invite you to designate Peace Sunday, November 10, 2002, as a time for congregational discernment. Gather to listen to what God is calling us to do as a Mennonite Church in the United States. We need to hear God's voice, as congregations and as a new denomination, even as the tensions between the United States and Iraq seem inevitably headed toward war.

As a people of faith and hope, we believe deeply in the power of prayer. Let us pray today and on November 10 that God will show us ways to serve as Christ's peacemakers. Join me in praying and fasting on November 10 so that:

- We will deepen our own spiritual commitment to pray for the Iraqi people and for our own political leaders who are making decisions.
- We will discern how to strengthen our witness for Christ's peace -- as individuals, as congregations, and as a denomination while our nation prepares for war.

Each Mennonite Church USA congregation may be at a unique place in its peace journey. Each congregation's discernment and their opportunities for a peace witness may be different. Pastors and congregational leaders will determine the pastoral and prophetic needs of their congregations during this time of possible war. We will all be challenged to find what it means to live in our communities as peacemakers and offer that witness as Mennonite Church USA to our nation and world. Prayer and fasting can help us hear God's voice and give us strength to move ahead.

I pray that your congregation will choose to join other congregations of Mennonite Church USA as we pray and fast for discernment on Peace Sunday, November 10 (you'll find ample worship resources and action ideas for your congregation on the Peace and Justice Support Network web site at <http://peace.MennoLink.org>). After November 10, please share with us what God is saying to you so that we can share your voice with other congregations. Respond to [peaceadvocate@mennoniteusa.org](mailto:peaceadvocate@mennoniteusa.org).

May we together find both courage and blessing as God's peacemakers,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James Schrag".

James F. Schrag, Executive Director  
Mennonite Church USA Executive Board