

January 23, 2007

The Honorable George W. Bush  
The White House  
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. President,

As leaders of churches and Christian institutions in the United States, we bring you greetings for the New Year and encouragement as you meet the challenges that face our nation and the global community. Even though we are from a wide range of Christian traditions – Orthodox, Catholic, mainstream and evangelical Protestants – we stand close together in our hopes and prayers for peace in the land we all call Holy and for the reconciliation of the children of Abraham – Jews, Christians and Muslims.

We come to you with two interrelated appeals that are central to our faith-motivated quest for peace with justice. **First, we ask that you make Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking, in the context of a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace initiative, an urgent priority for your Administration.** We recognize the great many difficulties and struggles that the people of the Middle East region must confront and the heavy responsibilities that fall upon you to help restore hope for a better future for them and for the citizens of the United States. We know that many view the Israeli-Palestinian situation as the most intractable in our troubled world, but we know that when it is resolved, the positive repercussions will go well beyond that small geographic area.

We commend your vision of a viable, contiguous Palestinian state living as a peaceful neighbor alongside the state of Israel, with both nations secure and recognized by their neighbors. With your active engagement, this vision could reignite a passion for peace that can overcome the appeal of violence, vengeance and exclusivity. The United States and the world will become safer as confidence grows that the U.S. is willing to take leadership and work cooperatively with the United Nations and other nations to resolve this conflict.

We bring to you our deepening concern for the welfare and future of the Palestinian Christian community. A small but vital part of the Palestinian society, Christians are rapidly emigrating to countries where they can gain the economic and physical security that is denied all Palestinians living under occupation. The future of the Palestinian Christians requires a solution to the conflict that will allow both peoples – Israelis and Palestinians - to live side-by-side in two states where all enjoy justice, peace and security.

The Palestinian Christian leaders have asked us to bring to your attention the very grave situation of Jerusalem. They remind us that Jerusalem is the location of “not only historical memories and sacred places of pilgrimage, but also living communities of believers.” With the construction by Israel of the separation barrier, many of the faithful – both Christians and Muslims – are excluded from the Holy City, and Jerusalem is severed from Bethlehem. **Our second appeal is for you to work with Israelis, Palestinians and the international community to guarantee access to Jerusalem’s Holy Places and religious liberty for all peoples. Resolving the status of Jerusalem is key to achieving a workable two-state solution.**

Mr. President, as this New Year begins, we encourage you to maintain the faith, the courage and the resolve to work with other world leaders toward negotiations that guarantee two viable and secure states, Israel and Palestine, living side-by-side and sharing Jerusalem. For guidance we look to 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 in praying for peace in the Holy Land and at home.

Sincerely,

**The Most Rev. Archbishop Barsamian**  
Primate, Diocese of the  
Armenian Church of America (Eastern)

**+Bishop Dimitrios of Xanthos**  
Ecumenical Officer  
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

**Bishop Thomas G. Wenski**  
Chairman, Committee on Int'l Policy  
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

**The Rev. Mark S. Hanson**  
Presiding Bishop  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

**The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori**  
Presiding Bishop  
The Episcopal Church

Are joined by:

**The Rt. Rev. Wayne Burkette**  
President, Provincial Elders' Conference  
Moravian Church in America, Southern Province

**Ken Hackett**  
President  
Catholic Relief Services

**Simone Campbell, SSS**  
Executive Director  
NETWORK

**Rev. Dr. Stan Hastey**  
Executive Director  
Alliance of Baptists

**Tony Campolo**  
Founder  
Evangelical Association for the Promotion of  
Education

**Bishop Janice Riggle Huie**  
President, Council of Bishops  
The United Methodist Church

**Sister Mary Dacey, SSJ**  
President  
Leadership Conference of Women Religious

**Very Rev. Dominic Izzo, OP**  
President, Catholic Conference of  
Major Superiors of Men's Institutes

**Marie Dennis**  
Director  
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

**Rev. Phillip L. Jones**  
Director, Washington Office  
Church of the Brethren

**Rev. Robert Edgar**  
General Secretary  
National Council of Churches

**Rev. Dr. Clifton Kirkpatrick**  
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly  
Presbyterian Church (USA)

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

**Rev. Michael E. Livingston**  
Executive Director,  
International Council of Community Churches  
President, National Council of Churches

***Albert C. Lobe***

Interim Executive Director  
Mennonite Central Committee

***E. Earl McCloud, Jr. Bishop***

Office of Ecumenical & Urban Affairs  
African Methodist Episcopal Church

***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.

***Richard J. Mouw***

President  
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***David Neff***

Editor and Vice-President  
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***Leonard Rodgers***

Executive Director  
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***Br. Mark Schroeder, OFM***

President, Franciscan Friars (OFM)  
English Speaking Conference  
JPIC Council

***Metropolitan PHILIP (Saliba)***

Primate  
Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of North America

***Ambassador Robert A. Seiple***

Former Ambassador-at-Large for  
International Religious Freedom

***Ronald J. Sider***

President  
Evangelicals for Social Action

***Rev. William G. Sinkford***

President  
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations

***Msgr. Robert L. Stern***

Secretary General, CNEWA  
President, Pontifical Mission for Palestine

***The Rev. John H. Thomas***

General Minister and President  
United Church of Christ

***Joe Volk***

Executive Secretary  
Friends Committee on National Legislation

***Jim Wallis***

CEO  
Sojourners/Call to Renewal

***The Rev. Dr. Sharon E. Watkins***

General Minister and President  
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

***Corinne Whitlatch***

Executive Director  
Churches for Middle East Peace

***Bishop Gabino Zavala***

Bishop President  
Pax Christi USA: National Catholic Peace Movement