

A Resolution Repudiating the 2006 Resolution Supporting War in Iraq

WHEREAS paragraph 165.C of the *Book of Discipline* states: “We believe war is incompatible with the teachings and example of Christ. We therefore reject war as an instrument of national foreign policy. We oppose unilateral first / preemptive strike actions and strategies on the part of any government” AND

WHEREAS the 2006 North Alabama Annual Conference passed a resolution supporting the preemptive war in Iraq. This resolution was based on a flagrant misuse of scripture (Matthew 24:6) and pro-war jingoism instead of prayerfully seeking the will of God, AND

WHEREAS this resolution conflated Afghanistan with Iraq in referencing support for terrorism, AND

WHEREAS evidence has since emerged that the United States presidential administration in 2001 was actively seeking a pretext for war in Iraq, selectively choosing information that supported a theory of the presence of weapons of mass destruction, and vigorously pursued an agenda of propaganda to sell the war to the American people, AND

WHEREAS scripture teaches us that God frowns upon inventing pretexts for violence (as in the story of Naboth’s Vineyard in 1 Kings 21), laments that those who seek peace are usually a minority voice (Psalm 120), and dreams of a day of disarmament and repurposing of the machinery of war (Isaiah 2:4), AND

WHEREAS the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church was complicit in the advancement of war propaganda, claiming to “support President Bush and our troops in the effort to defend and protect our FREEDOM [sic] against any unprovoked international aggression,” and urged “President George W. Bush to complete the objective of the mission,” AND

WHEREAS President Bush declared the mission accomplished in 2003, three years before the North Alabama Conference took up aforementioned 2006 resolution, AND

WHEREAS no weapons of mass destruction were ever found in Iraq, though polls indicate that many Americans persist in this false belief, in part because of the effectiveness of the propaganda the North Alabama Conference was complicit in spreading, AND

WHEREAS the War in Iraq from 2003 until 2011 cost \$1.06 trillion and added \$1 trillion to the national debt, AND

WHEREAS the War in Iraq cost the lives of 5,000 American troops, and according to researchers in the United States, Canada, and Iraq, resulted in an estimated 405,000 civilian deaths which are attributable to violence and the collapse of Iraq’s infrastructure, AND

WHEREAS political destabilization in Iraq also led to the dwindling and disappearance of numerous Christian communities, some of them dating from the time of the apostles; it also contributed to the rise of the so-called Islamic State and violence that continues in the Middle East against Christians and Muslims to this day, AND

WHEREAS the youngest generation among us has never known a single day without our nation being in a state of war,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church repents of its support for preemptive war, which is contrary to the *Book of Discipline*, and we recommit ourselves to the position on war outlined in the Social Principles. We repudiate the 2006 Resolution supporting war in Iraq. The clergy among us acknowledge that we have, as a body, violated the *Book of Discipline*, and that we have broken our sacred covenant of mutual accountability “to resist evil, oppression, and injustice in whatever forms they present themselves” by promoting preemptive war.

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we confess our selective application of the Social Principles of our denomination. We confess that we are more likely to accommodate our culture of war and imperialism than to pursue the countercultural Kingdom of God and the things that make for peace. We confess that our notions of right and wrong are sometimes driven more by political ideology and our nation’s culture war than pursuit of the gospel

of Jesus Christ. We confess that our support for war is directly tied to our fidelity to patriarchy, violence, sexism, militarism, and racism, and that while those idols are not unique to North Alabama, they are rooted in our regional cultural history of slavery and Jim Crow.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the North Alabama Conference will recognize that peacemaking is never popular; and that, as Jesus said, prophets are most hated in their home towns. We will be circumspect about foreign policy, and avoid cheerleading our nation's gleeful embrace of violence, and the way it saddles future generations with economic debt, psychological trauma, and the consequences of environmental destruction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the churches of the North Alabama Conference financially support ministries of recovery, rebuilding, and reparations in Iraq and other countries in the Middle East that have been destabilized, especially ministries which center the leadership of those most affected by the wars we have supported.

Rationale: As our nation enters its eighteenth year of perpetual war in the Middle East, the newest generation of soldiers are younger than the war itself. Since the 2006 Resolution by the North Alabama Conference, investigations have uncovered that the reasons for war in Iraq were not merely fabricated from bad intelligence. In 2001, the administration was actively seeking a pretext to go to war (see the *New York Times* analysis at the following link: www.nytimes.com/live/britain-inquiry-iraq-war.)

Moreover, because of our nation's political polarization and the church's embrace of pro-war ideology, many people remain unaware that weapons of mass destruction were never found in Iraq (see the Christian Science Monitor's article here: www.csmonitor.com/USA/Politics/Decoder/2015/0107/Why-many-Americans-hold-false-beliefs-about-WMDs-in-Iraq-and-Obama-s-birth-place). According to Dan Cassino of Farleigh Dickinson University, "People who think we did the right thing in invading Iraq seem to be revising their memories to retroactively justify the invasion. This sort of motivated reasoning is pretty common: when people want to believe something, they'll twist the facts to fit it."

The cost in human life and resources has been enormous. Before 2001, the United States had an economic surplus. The nation has been borrowing money to finance more conflict, saddling future generations with debt, instead of investing it in infrastructure, education, or health care. (See Cost of Iraq War, Its Timeline, and The Economic Impact: www.thebalance.com/cost-of-iraq-war-timeline-economic-impact-3306301).

This resolution is important to correct the record, repent of our collective sin, and avoid the saber-rattling that continues to come from the White House over Venezuela or whatever country the United States intends to invade next. We who follow the Prince of Peace cannot also be loyal to the gods of war.

There are a number of ministries in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, all of which have suffered as a result of increased instability in the region. SIFAT has graduates doing ministry in Pakistan, and UMCOR operates several projects in Iraq itself. These would be appropriate ways for our conference to show its contrition for its support of an unjust war.

2006 Resolution on the Iraq War *(passed by a vote of 329 to 250)*

WHEREAS we the United Methodist of the North Alabama Annual Conference who are disciples of Jesus Christ, affirm that He is the Lord of our lives.

WHEREAS Jesus answered the early disciple's private question of Matthew 24:3 (KJV) ". . . and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and the end of the world?"

WHEREAS Jesus answered them in Matthew 24:6 (KJV) "and ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars:..."

WHEREAS Jesus taught and lived a non-violent life, that cost Him His own life.

WHEREAS The United Methodist Book of Discipline Section 165C in part states that: "We believe that war is incompatible with the teachings and example of Christ. We therefore reject war as an instrument of national foreign policy, to be employed only as a last resort in the prevention of such evils as genocide, brutal suppression of human rights, and unprovoked international aggression..."

WHEREAS we the Annual Conference of The North Alabama Conference of The United Methodist Church do support President Bush and our troops in the effort to defend and protect our FREEEDOM against any unprovoked international aggression and/or supporter(s) of aggression speak for ourselves.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the North Alabama Conference of The United Methodist Church urges President George W. Bush to complete the objective of the mission.

Submitted by: David Barnhart

Committee vote: 6 Yes (Concurrence) 0 No (Non-concurrence) 1 Abstain

The role of the Committee is not to approve or disapprove the content of a particular petition or resolution but to ensure that they have followed the appropriate process (as outlined in our standing rules) and that they are in agreement with the Book of Discipline, including our Social Principles, and our standing rules.