

**Behind the News: Visions for Peace - Voices of Faith
Special Issue no. 22, 20 March 2003**

*My anguish, my anguish!
I writhe in pain!
Oh the walls of my heart!
My heart is beating wildly;
I cannot keep silent,
For I hear the sound of the trumpet,
The alarm of war.*

-- Jeremiah 4:19-22

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not let them be afraid.

-- John 14: 27

As the machinery of war rolls and the news speaks of "Shock and Awe", "strategic targets" and "effective military action", we remember words of faith and promise, we pray for all who suffer in war, and we continue our actions for peace.

- 1. Pray for peace**
- 2. Speak for peace**
- 3. Act for peace**
- 4. Help those in need**

1. Pray for peace

Join millions of people across the face of the globe who pray for peace. You may wish to join others in using common prayers, including a [special order for ecumenical worship](http://wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/international/iraqpeaceservice.html) (<http://wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/international/iraqpeaceservice.html>) that will be used today at the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva. (French, Spanish, and German versions of the service will also be available soon). Many other resources for prayer are offered by churches on-line.

2. Speak for peace

Read statements for peace aloud in your churches, circulate them in your parish, and speak out individually and together as a community of faith.

Rev. Dr Konrad Raiser, general secretary of the World Council of Churches, has issued a [statement](http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/international/iraqstatement.html) (<http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/international/iraqstatement.html>) against the war in Iraq. In a [reflection](http://wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/international/raiser.html) (<http://wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/international/raiser.html>) for an ecumenical prayer service for peace held today at the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva says *"There is no reason to feel discouraged that [the churches'] voice has not been heard, that the government has even refused to hear them. Rather, we should celebrate the fact that for the first time the churches together have placed the commandment of God above their respective political loyalties. God wills peace for God's people, for this world and therefore the institution of war must be overcome, war must be outlawed as a legally recognized means for resolving civic or interstate conflicts. The united voice of the churches represents a spiritual power that the governments will have to recognize."*

"The plight of the Iraqi people weighs heavily on our hearts," says Thor-Arne Prois, director of the coordinating office of [Action by Churches Together \(ACT\) International](http://www.act-intl.org/news/dt_nr_2003/nr_iraq0203.html) (http://www.act-intl.org/news/dt_nr_2003/nr_iraq0203.html) - a global alliance of churches and related agencies working in field of humanitarian relief in Iraq and the Middle East. "Under the present circumstances, we affirm the long-standing humanitarian principle of unconditional access to people in need."

On the eve of war, His Holiness Pope John Paul II led a [prayer for peace](#) and a Vatican spokesperson said, *"He who decides that all peaceful means that international law offers us are exhausted, assumes a great responsibility, in front of God, his conscience and history."* (http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/audiences/2003/documents/hf_jp-ii_aud_20030319_en.html)

On March 18, Bob Edgar, general secretary of the [National Council of Churches](#) said, *"The near certainty of war has not changed our vocation as Christians to be peacemakers. Throughout the past months, churches have risen to this high calling. We have witnessed for peace and shared our understanding of the biblical basis for peacemaking... In the gloom of war, let us be guided by the light of faith and let it shine forth through our words and actions."* (<http://www.nccusa.org/>)

3. Act for peace

Join efforts around the world to say "no" to war, resist violence, and build peace with simple and effective actions. Actions can include: speaking to the media, expressing your views to government leaders, taking part in vigils, fasts or public demonstrations, and preaching and teaching peace. <http://wcc-coe.org/wcc/behindthenews/bulletin21-annex.html>

4. Help those in need

Wars result in death, displacement of people, destruction of property and the environment, and a shortage of supplies to meet basic human needs. Give generously and contribute to the emergency and disaster relief fund or appeal of your church and the work it does through the global alliance of [Action by Churches Together \(ACT\) International](#) (http://www.act-intl.org/act_links_to_members.html). Your support is vital and your gift can make a lifesaving difference in providing humanitarian aid to the people of Iraq.

Behind the news: Visions for Peace – Voices of Faith is a joint initiative of:

**World Council of Churches (WCC)
Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance
Action by Churches Together (ACT)**

This bulletin/website is intended to provide an ecumenical space for visions for peace and voices of faith; these materials do not necessarily reflect official policy of WCC, ACT, or EAA.

Please circulate the Bulletin to friends, colleagues and people who are looking for alternative perspectives on the current situation.

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