

21 September 2001

To the members of our churches after the tragedy in the United States:

Grace to you and peace from our Lord Jesus Christ!

We write to you as leaders of Canadian Churches to express our deep compassion for all those who have suffered in the terrorist attacks in the United States. We are part of a common family in which the suffering of so many has affected us all.

Throughout the world people of all nations, races and faith have felt bound together in this tragedy. Muslims, Christians, Jews, Sikhs, Buddhists, Hindus and others have expressed a common condemnation of the actions of the terrorists and a common hope that the world might find a path to reconciliation rather than an increasing cycle of violence. As Christians we believe that there is one God who passionately cares for all the peoples of the world, and who calls us with no less passion to search for a world in which peace and justice prevail.

In the common pursuit of peace, we bring a particular perspective formed by our commitment to following Jesus Christ and by the experience of the Christian church throughout our history. The peace we seek will not be based on conquering others, forcing peoples into submission, hurting the innocent, or ignoring the victims and people marginalized throughout our world. The peace of Christ will take us into paths that lead to reconciliation with God and to reconciliation among peoples through the power of the Spirit of God breaking in among us. It will be a path of justice, equity, and security for all. It is a path we believe God is calling us to in this important moment.

As we join others of good will, we will enter into new territory without a common road map. As Canadians respond to the events of September 11, we call for actions guided by basic values that are consistent with our Christian faith and with our experience in peace-building.

**Bring terrorists to justice.**

Those who have planned and assisted in this terrorist action must be brought to justice. This must be done through appropriate national and international law enforcement measures in ways that do not perpetuate violence and further acts of terror. Military actions that harm civilians are wrong and feed further cycles of terrorism.

**Observe due process.**

The rule of law is essential for both justice and for legitimacy. In international relations, *due process* is always difficult. The world is only now constructing the International Criminal Court. We can help extend the rule of law by slowing down the reaction time to allow for considered and measured responses.

**Define the limits to force.**

In a response that is already widely regarded as “the war on terrorism”, it is vitally important for governments to insist on clear limits to force. At a minimum, any resort to force must conform fully to international humanitarian law, which precludes attacks on civilian populations. And it must be focused on bringing perpetrators of terror to trial, on protecting innocent civilians, and on breaking the cycle of violence.

**Address the root causes.**

Careful consideration of the conditions in which terrorism flourishes must be an essential part of any campaign to eliminate it. We believe that it is possible to acknowledge and understand the deeper causes of terrorism without excusing it. Addressing terrorism must also involve persistent action to address the social, economic and political conditions in which it takes root.

In this context we believe that all of us need to repent, including Canada. It will not serve the greater cause of security for all to ignore the legitimate grievances that do exist. Countless innocent children, men and women have died and are dying in other countries of this world because of poverty, injustice and, yes, as a direct result of actions and campaigns in which we are implicated. Honesty, not arrogance, is what is required of us in this moment.

**Acknowledge our interdependence.**

Whatever action is taken must fully acknowledge that we live in an interdependent world. It is no longer possible to believe that we can live in an island of fortified safety in an otherwise unsafe world. The security of the American people is our desire and is in our interest. So is the security of the peoples of the Arab world and of all the people with whom we share the earth.

Co-operative international efforts to prevent terrorism must be supplemented by co-operation in developing a broad range of agreements that provide for the security of all. International agreements such as the Kyoto Protocol, the International Criminal Court, the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, legal limits on small arms possession and transfers, and other international mechanisms are vital building blocks for a world community that cares for the security and safety of all of its citizens.

**Recover a justice and peace perspective.**

Finally, we must recover a larger perspective in this struggle. It is not morally or spiritually acceptable to speak lightly of war. A campaign against terrorism is necessary, but only in the context of a broader commitment to justice. In the past, a single-minded campaign against communism in Afghanistan helped create conditions of terror in Afghanistan, including support to the now accused Osama bin Laden; it spawned the Taliban; and it contributed to enormous instability in Pakistan. So also an unthinking military campaign against terrorism could have immense unforeseen consequences if not guided by due processes of law, appropriate limits to force, and pursuit of justice for all.

In the days following the attack on the World Trade Centre, we have been faced with profoundly difficult questions, many of which we cannot answer. What we can offer is our conviction that nothing of the true God of any of the faiths of the world was to be found in these actions of terror.

We deplore the targeting of other faiths, whose members have been unjustly linked to terrorism by their perceived difference. Muslims, Jews, Sikhs and Hindus have all at various times experienced such attacks. In this moment we are concerned for many friends and colleagues of other faiths who feel particularly at risk. We therefore encourage Christians throughout Canada to join together with people of other faiths to offer solidarity and courage. Above all let us find a common voice in calling for security and safety for all the world's people.

May Jesus Christ guide our actions and our prayers. And may all of God's precious people know the reality of Micah's vision for our world:

*"[T]hey shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees. And no one shall make them afraid." Micah 4:4*