



Former PC(USA) Moderator Speaks for Peace

Rick Ufford-Chase, former PC(USA) Moderator, spoke at the *War, Peace & Justice Forum* of The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church on March 6, 2007 on the challenge of waging peace and taking civil initiative to end the war in Iraq. Ufford-Chase observed that two things prevent citizens from taking a stand for peace: First is complacency and the perception that the war is “getting better” or “going to be over” soon. A sign of this trend is the large reduction in registered participants for the “Christian Peace Witness for Iraq,” down to 500 from several thousand last year. Second is fear when people begin to capitulate to concerns of arrest or backlash to standing up for peace. Ufford-Chase reminded us that Jesus counseled repeatedly, “Do not be afraid” (reminding us of the Roman occupation in Jesus’ time), and that we as Christians must spread the message of how to deal with issues that frighten us and not capitulate to fear.

Ufford-Chase said that we must learn how to do peacemaking, how to stand up for what is right, and how to do “civil initiatives” rather than civil disobedience. He said it is not disobedience to point out and correct the “inappropriate reinterpretation of current law,” whether it is redefining torture, international law standards, or prisoners’ judicial rights. When law is actively controverted, citizens must work to ensure that the correct law is upheld. He said that violence will reign until we risk for the cause of peace. Christians must begin with pro-activity, with what we believe, not with what we are against. Hence, Christian Peacemaking Teams must begin to form conversations in our religious communities. We must talk about what we are for—peace, justice, housing, elimination of hunger, protecting the environment—and using the \$720 million per day spent on the Iraq/Afghanistan wars—to work for justice and just living standards for all God’s people. We need outrage from Presbyterians on the injustice that pervades our world to motivate us to all participate in seeking peace and justice. To this end, Ufford-Chase distributed “A Pledge to Seek Peace and Pursue It,” a petition to stand for the oppressed, to partner with those of other faith traditions, to speak the prophetic word, and

model the way of peace. This pledge and petition can be signed on line through the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship. Ufford-Chase ended by reading a story, *Bicycle Quilt Village*, written by Mike Benefield that captures the power of citizens working for peace, saying that “everything in this story is true except the part that hasn’t happened yet.” In his closing words, Ufford-Chase said we have everything we need to make peace: we have community, we can act boldly, but we must be willing to make it our life’s work.

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