

Nearly 100 UMC bishops decry war: Resolution calls for timeline for U.S. withdrawal from Iraq

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The United Methodist Council of Bishops, meeting in early November, adopted a resolution urging President Bush to set a timeline for withdrawing all U.S. military forces from Iraq. A separate statement signed by 96 active and retired Methodist bishops expresses repentance for “our complicity in what we believe to be the unjust and immoral invasion and occupation of Iraq.”

The signers constituted more than half of the bishops in the worldwide denomination. Bishop Kenneth Carder, one of the signers, told United Methodist News Service on November 11 that the statement had been in the works for six weeks.

While saying that the sacrifices of military personnel are valued, the bishops said that true security is not acquired through weapons of war.

On November 15 the U.S. Senate passed a resolution with broad bipartisan support, 79 to 19, calling on Bush to turn over to Iraqis more control of their nation in order to hasten the eventual withdrawal of U.S. troops. The Republican-sponsored measure stopped short of asking for a firm date, but the resolution’s passage amounted to the first direct challenge to the White House from Congress on the war.

The bishops’ statement meanwhile lamented that “our preoccupation” with conventional church business continues while American men and women kill or are killed, “while thousands of Iraqi people needlessly suffer and die, while poverty increases and preventable diseases go untreated.”

In October the United Methodist Board of Church and Society passed a resolution of its own calling for withdrawal from Iraq. “As people of faith, we raise our voice in protest against the tragedy of the unjust war in Iraq,” said the statement.