

December 11, 2005

## Chicago-area Church of the Brethren Pastors' *Call to be a Living Peace Church*

### *Background*

In 2003, *On Earth Peace* called the denomination with the following statement [in part]. Annual Conference subsequently adopted the call.

**Whereas:** Jesus breaks down the dividing wall of hostility (Ephesians 2:14) and weeps that we do not know "the things that make for peace" (Luke 19:41-42), we confess that we are often complacent or uninformed about injustice, violence, and exclusion of others, both in our communities and in the world;

**Whereas:** we are called to love our enemies (Matthew 5:43-48) and to follow Jesus' example of building bridges across lines of race, class and creed (John 4), we confess that we struggle with finding a balance between the claims of citizenship and our kinship with all people;

**Whereas:** the church has a prophetic mission to live out Christ's way of peace (Luke 1:79), and to express God's steadfast love in all our relationships (Psalm 85:10-13), we confess that we struggle in our own congregations and church structures with racism, domestic violence, destructive communication, and many forms of sin.

### *Pastors' Statement on Peace*

*... the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned." Matthew 4:16*

In this Advent season, we, the Chicago-area Church of the Brethren pastors, renew our commitment to lead our congregations to be living peace churches.

We call our members and our churches as a whole to clearly and publicly announce that all human beings are created in God's image. When any human being is violated, tortured or killed, our Lord is again violated, tortured and killed. When our government advocates in guarded or obscure language that chemical warfare may be used on soldiers but not on civilians, or says that the Geneva Convention does not apply to US-held prisoners, or when, for our so-called security, torture is committed in a third country, silence is a betrayal of our faith and witness.

We urge our members and congregations to deepen their commitment and witness to the Author of Life and Peace. We have a Christian and moral obligation to refuse to participate, in whatever ways God leads us, in the warring madness of our leaders. In order to follow the Prince of Peace and promote the gospel of peace, we also have a Christian and moral obligation to interrupt the state-sponsored lies and deception.

May God lead us to strengthen our Christian discipleship this Advent season.